Icarus & The Man Who Was The Sun

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Icarus & The Man Who Was The Sun

by everyday_forever

Summary

Will Graham died that night in Hannibal's kitchen, though Hannibal is unaware of this result. As Will figures out that he is in fact dead, and is now a ghost, he resolves to track down Hannibal in Italy and haunt him for the rest of his life. Yet when he and Hannibal are reunited, Hannibal cannot initially tell that Will is already dead.

Then the unexpected happens. They continue to fall deeper in love, increasingly distressed when they realize they cannot feel the other's touch. The two men must tackle what it means to die, to live, and to fall in love- and how they can do that together, or not. As they both ache and yearn for each other, murder and tableaus ensue as Hannibal, much like Icarus, relentlessly pursues the Man Who Was The Sun.

Notes

Please make sure you read the tags! This work has a lot of sadness, heartbreak, yearning, and general pain. With that said, there is a very rewarding ending, though it is still bittersweet. So just keep that in mind! I'm so excited to explore this story and I promise the ending is worth all of the pain❤️

See the end of the work for more notes

Mizumono

Will ducked down behind a tree at the back of his shed as he heard the sirens increase in volume as they neared his house. He struggled to catch his breath and hastily reached into his pocket, flipping his phone over in his hand a couple of times. *Think, think, think. Should I tell him? No… But….* He swore under his breath, shaking his head as he tried to decide.

He shakily looked down at his phone, his fingers flying across the screen as he nervously dialed Hannibal's number. As Will listened to the dial tone, his stomach twisted itself into intricate little knots, unsure of what he should do. Hannibal picked up on the second ring.

"Hello?" came Hannibal's voice, infused with an enviable calmness. And then, Will's anxiety stopped. The cadence of Hannibal's voice murmuring a single word stilled his hand and just like that, Will decided.

"They know," Will said and just as quickly hung up the phone. He slid it back into his pocket, thinking. If warrants had been issued for his and Jack's arrest, he didn't have too many options. He had to leave *now* .

And yet, Will couldn't shake the feeling that perhaps Jack was in trouble. *Or maybe you're just scared Hannibal is in danger- you could care less about Jack* . Will shook his head, desperately trying to scatter the traitorous voice in his head. Will sighed as he stood, pulling his coat tightly around him and straightening out the gun resting against the small of his back.

He ran through the woods quickly before coming out to the road where he promptly called a taxi and gave the driver Hannibal's home address. His foot tapped incessantly and he kept wringing his hands together, anxious to know Hannibal was safe. Yet Will couldn't help but wish in the back of his mind that maybe- *just maybe* - Hannibal would be waiting for him to leave with him after all.

He rubbed his hands over his face and took a deep breath, trying to steady himself. He glanced at his watch. Jack would be arriving at Hannibal's house in twenty minutes or so, soon after Will would arrive. Perhaps if Hannibal had waited for him after all, they could escape Jack with just enough time…

Will's hopes were quickly quashed when he arrived at Hannibal's house and saw Jack's car parked in the road. *Fuck* .

Will's blood turned to ice when something that looked suspiciously like a human body on the ground near the front door caught his eye. He stepped out of the taxi and ran through the rain before his stomach dropped when he saw Alana sprawled out on the ground, glass shards decorating the pavement around her. He dropped to his knees beside her, a horrified expression taking over his face as he took in the blood around her. She tried to say something but he quickly shushed her.

“Don’t talk, just breathe…” he said, whipping out his phone once again. “This is Will Graham. I need ERT at Hannibal Lecter’s residence.” He stared down at Alana again before taking off his coat and covering her with it to protect her from the rain. Alana managed to tell him that Jack was inside and he nodded, drawing his gun as he left her to enter the house.

Time seemed to stand still inside the house. Will tensed, listening closely for any sign of movement. There were none. He slowly rounded the corner leading to the kitchen and his eyes immediately fixated on the blood pooling by the pantry door. His immediate thought was of Hannibal. *No, please*... He began to walk toward the door but he froze as he saw a shadow out of the corner of his eye. He looked over and his stomach dropped as his mouth fell open with utter disbelief. *It can’t be*...

Abigail stood in the corner of the kitchen, shaking and very visibly distraught. Will’s heart stumbled as he rapidly tried to process everything he was feeling. His heart felt as if it were breaking and pulling itself back together simultaneously. Through the confusion clouding his brain, he finally *understood* . He understood then that Hannibal had intended to surprise him, to reunite them- if Will had just agreed to flee the country with Hannibal as he had been so desperately tempted to do.

“Abigail?” came Will’s strained voice. She began to shake more and tears fell down her face.

“I didn’t know what else to do. So I did what he told me.”

Will stared at her in bewilderment as he tried to understand what Hannibal had told her to do. Suddenly, the thought connected, and Alana laying outside bleeding out in the rain made all the more sense. Righteous anger engulfed Will’s body as he began to see red, longing to lash out at Hannibal for subjecting Abigail to the pain.

“Where is he?” Will ground out. Abigail’s eyes shifted minutely to the side before glancing dejectedly back at him. Will could *feel* Hannibal behind him and as the awareness of his presence began to seep into Will’s bones, he could feel his own anger begin to dissipate, confusion taking over. Will began to slowly turn towards Hannibal, not even bothering to bring up his gun, knowing he’d be unable to use it.

“You were supposed to *leave*,” Will said emphatically, disbelief clouding his face. His mouth fell further open as he gazed upon the heartache so visibly sketched on Hannibal’s visage.

“We couldn’t leave without you” Hannibal said softly, his eyes tracing over Will’s face with uncharacteristic vulnerability. Will felt himself glued to the spot, unable to move from mere captivation in watching Hannibal’s expressions.

Hannibal slowly brought his hand up to Will’s face and cupped his cheek, stroking his thumb along it softly. Will gazed wide-eyed back at him, his breath hitching just slightly in his throat at the intimacy of the gesture. Will couldn’t help but believe Hannibal was about to lean in and kiss him. Hannibal had waited for him, just as he had hoped…

But that hope was shattered as Will felt the cold steel of a sharp blade pierce his stomach, the coolness quickly turning to heat as it ripped across his abdomen. Will let out a cry and slumped forward as he absentmindedly registered his blood beginning to pour out of him at

alarming speed, drenching his shoes. Hannibal swept forward to catch him, gripping Will in his strong arms and resting his chin on Hannibal's shoulder.

Will brought up one arm to clasp tightly to Hannibal's shirt, clutching on to the man desperately. He felt Hannibal hold him gently, almost *tenderly* , which only served to wound Will more. Hannibal's hands stroked the back of his head and Will felt desperately tempted to sink into that feeling, to allow it to claim him. Hannibal placed his own chin on Will's shoulder and began to speak into his ear.

"Time did reverse. The teacup that I shattered dared to come together. A place was made for Abigail in your world. Do you understand?"

Will shook his head, though it wasn't from a total lack of understanding as much as it was a desire for Hannibal to hold him for just a while longer. *Hold me in your arms while I die, Hannibal. Please.*

"A place was made for all of us, together." Hannibal pulled back to look at Will in his eyes. Will stared back at him helplessly as he began to feel himself shatter as the teacup he was. Again.

"I wanted to surprise you," Hannibal added. Will's heart twisted and he felt the weight of the world fall upon him, filling his lungs with grief over what could have been. He gasped for breath, realizing it could very well be blood filling his lungs instead.

"But you… you wanted to surprise me," Hannibal said, his face twisting into the micro-expressional equivalent of a grimace as he let Will fall to the floor. Will thudded against the ground and pulled himself back to sit against the kitchen cabinets as he clutched at his stomach, trying to slow the bleeding.

Dark red blood covered his arms and Will felt his life began to flicker. He sputtered, trying to gather every ounce of self-will to just *hold on* for a little while longer. He looked up at Hannibal as his empathy pulled him to the man once again, unwilling to allow himself to detach from the man killing him.

"I let you see me," Hannibal said, voice thick with raw emotion. The display broke something inside of Will too and he continued to watch with horror, horror at his own responsibility for this outcome, and for the pain he had caused to Hannibal.

"I let you know me," Hannibal continued. " *See* me. I gave you a rare gift, but you didn't want it."

"Didn't I?" Will protested. Surely Hannibal must know that everything he had felt had been real? *Surely Hannibal must know how much I care.*

Hannibal gazed at him, considering, before his lip curled minutely.

"You would deny me my life."

"N-n-no. Not your life, no," Will said, shaking his head insistently.

“My freedom then, you would take that from me,” Hannibal said, anger coloring his tone. “Confine me to a prison cell.”

Pain seared through Will’s abdomen once again and he clutched at the gasp dissecting him roughly, praying that he wouldn’t die. He closed his eyes and began to shake with the pain, the red-hot discomfort spreading through the rest of his body.

“Do you believe you could change me, the way I changed you?” Hannibal asked, curiosity apparent in his tone. Will brought his head up to look at Hannibal, confident in his answer.

“I already did,” Will said, knowing that *no one* else could have caused Hannibal to *feel* as much as the man was feeling at this moment. Hannibal took in his answer, mulling over it, before recognition of its validity shone in his eyes. He moved his lips as if he were thinking of a reply before pausing, momentarily unsure of what to say. But then he lifted his chin, intent on regaining the upper hand.

“Fate and circumstance have returned us to this moment, when the teacup shatters.”

Will stared intently up at Hannibal, a whirlwind of emotions flowing through him. He felt anger towards the man, for managing to shatter him once again. He also felt an overwhelming desire to be held by him. Startling too was the fear that gripped him, the fear that this could be it, that he could die tonight, *and never see Hannibal again.* Desperate for that not to be true, Will steeled himself and looked defiantly up at Hannibal. Hannibal gazed at him intensely.

“I forgive you, Will. Will you forgive me?”

A chill coursed through his blood, fighting for dominance over the heat of the pain, as Will realized what Hannibal was about to do.

“Don’t. D-don’t. No. No,” Will began to say, shaking his head as he pleaded with Hannibal. Hannibal merely held out his hand for Abigail who slowly walked toward it and took it. Hannibal then held her against him, her back to his chest, as he wound his other arm around her and held the knife to her throat.

“No, no, no!” Will shouted, desperate for Hannibal to stop. He began to sob, knowing that Hannibal wouldn’t listen to him. His sobs grew more hysterical as he watched Hannibal cut into Abigail’s throat, slicing her just as her father had, all while maintaining eye contact with Will, willing him to feel the pain Hannibal himself felt over Will’s betrayal.

Abigail began to sputter and gulp as blood sprayed out from her throat, falling across Will’s face. Will felt the hot drops of blood hit him and felt his heart physically break within him. Hannibal lowered Abigail to the floor and she clutched at her throat desperately before he knelt in front of Will as he groaned in pain, made infinitely worse by his own emotional distress and the pain his empathy was drawing into himself from Hannibal’s heart.

“You can make it all go away,” Hannibal said as Will watched a tear fall from Hannibal’s eye. “Put your head back. Wade into the quiet of the stream.”

Hannibal then stood back up, cast one last look down at Will, and left.

Will felt the last of his soul shatter and attempt to chase after Hannibal as he watched him leave from the corner of his eye. He then glanced over at Abigail and began to crawl with all his might towards her. When he reached her, he lifted his hand to cup her throat in an attempt to stop the bleeding.

But he soon began to feel his own life seep from him. *I called ERT for Alana. They should be here any minute. Just hold on.* Yet the pull of the quiet of the stream was too tempting an offer. He felt his arm fall from Abigail's neck and lower itself to the floor. He suddenly realized he could no longer move.

As he watched his blood mix with Abigail's and coat the floor of Hannibal's kitchen, he saw the ravenstag appear across from him. The beast lay on its side, huffing as it struggled to breathe, its blood seeping out to join theirs.

He fixated on it, willing the sight to keep him alive. The stag reminded Will of his own dark connection with Hannibal, and the mere thought of the connection was enough to give him sustenance and renew him with a fight to last just a little while longer. He heard what could only be ERT bust through the front door and begin running to the kitchen.

His vision began to blur and the stream began to become more clear. He vaguely registered arms lifting him onto a gurney and placing an oxygen mask over his face. He heard the voices of several people begin to run together before the voices were no longer voices; instead, the only thing he was aware of was the gurgling of a stream.

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Will blinked his eyes open against a bright white light. As his vision became more clear, he realized he was taking in the sight of sunlight filtering through the windows of his home. He sat up in bed and stretched deeply. He felt as if he had dreamt a terrible dream the night before, though he couldn't remember what exactly it had been about…

Shrugging it off, Will stood and went to greet his dogs. Yet as he approached them all snuggled in their beds, Buster whipped his head up and began to growl, low and deep. The other dogs, sensing his distress, also awoke and fixed their eyes on Will, likewise beginning to growl. Will felt his hairs stand up on end. *What the fuck?*

"Guys, it's me, it's alright," he cooed at them. Winston stopped growling and tilted his head in confusion. Will smiled and reached out to pet him and stumbled backwards with a yelp as he watched his hand go *through* Winston's head.

Shaking his head in disbelief, Will pulled himself to his feet and tried it again, watching with horror as he saw his hand pass completely through Winston, unfeeling. Winston didn't react either, clearly in a similar state of not being able to feel Will's touch.

Will then turned slowly to his other dogs and found that the case was the same with each dog. He then walked over to the front door, increasingly panicked, and felt a scream gather under his chin, waiting to be released, as he saw his hand disappear through the door before pulling it back.

Will sank to the floor, curling in on himself. *What happened last night?* He immediately began to wonder if he was incredibly high, or drunk, or possibly both. When he scrunched his eyes in concentration, memories began to slowly float from the heavens and seep back into his mind. He pulled each memory forward and viewed it, attempting to gather a story.

Soon, all the memories were slotted into their rightful place. He felt a deep wave of sadness, hurt, and anger as he thought about what Hannibal had done to Abigail. To him. The last thing he was able to regain memory of was of the paramedics picking him up and placing him on a gurney to take him to the hospital.

Will steepled his hands under his chin, deep in thought. A cold, prickling sense of dread began to run from the tips of his fingers down to his toes before settling deep in his chest. He stood and slowly lifted his shirt, his heart sinking when he saw his skin was perfectly clear, no gash in sight. No scar. As if it had never happened.

Or, more accurately, as if it *had* happened, but that Will simply hadn't lived to tell the tale.

Will slowly walked to his bathroom and stood in front of his mirror, his eyes stubbornly shut. When he finally acquired the courage to open them, he immediately regretted it. There was no reflection staring back at him.

Will laid down on his floor and stared at the ceiling. *I'm dead. Hannibal killed me. And now I'm fucking stuck here.* The same thoughts kept replaying in his mind as he tried to digest the fact that he had actually *died* . If he had died, that no doubt meant that Abigail was dead too, for she had been even worse off than him. He wondered if she was stuck behind too or if she had simply… gone on.

Will stared into Winston's eyes, eerily devoid of Will's reflection. He was grateful dogs at least had the ability to see and sense ghosts, though he was beginning to become increasingly anxious over the fact that his dogs would be hungry and he was incapable of grabbing the food to feed them. *Surely someone would come to get his dogs after hearing of his death?*

He paced across his house anxiously, wondering what he was going to do next. Curious, he walked up to his front door and steeled himself before slowly putting his foot out and through the door, satisfied when he didn't feel anything concerning. He then leant forward and stepped all the way through the door, breathing a sigh of relief as he realized he was able to walk in and out of his house with ease despite not being able to physically open the door handle. At least the four corners of his small house weren't destined to be his permanent hell. At least he could come outside and view the sky.

Will sat on the front porch for sometime, staring solemnly at the clouds. When he began to hear the sound of a car headed down the road to his house, he stood up, glancing curiously.

He felt an overwhelming sense of relief when he realized it was an FBI car, and was even more relieved- dare he say happy- when he saw Jimmy and Z step out of the car.

Yet the elation at seeing them quickly disappeared as he saw grief etched across their faces. They walked to the back of the car and grabbed a handful of leashes. Will's heart sank when he realized what was happening.

Jimmy and Z were uncharacteristically quiet as they walked toward Will's front porch. Will stood up and looked at them from in front of the door, but their eyes slid right past him, unseeing.

"Jimmy!" Will called. Nothing.

"Zeller!" Will shouted desperately. No response.

Jimmy and Z walked into his house and began leashing his dogs, murmuring gently to them.

"Brian?" Jimmy said.

"Yes?" Z said, sullen.

"Can we keep them?"

Will's brows knit together in confusion. *We?*

Z looked over at Jimmy, his face softening. He walked over and pulled Jimmy against his chest, running his hands up and down Jimmy's back soothingly before pulling back and nodding down at him.

"Jimmy, I don't know… are you sure you want to do that? I mean, wouldn't it just be painful to have them around all of time, constantly reminding us of yet another friend we've lost?"

Friend? Will's eyes widened as he realized his death was already being felt by others. He had assumed it wouldn't.

"Well, I think having them around might be nice… I know it'll be hard for a while, but after taking in Beverly's cat, I think it'd only be natural to take in Will's dogs too. And it would be a great way to remember Will, to feel like he's still around, in some way. I'm sure Jack would like to come spend some time with the dogs too, once he's recovered" Jimmy said, gazing up at Z imploringly.

Will's eyes widened in disbelief. *Jack's alive?*

Z slowly nodded in agreement.

"I think Will would like that, that people he knew are looking after his dogs," Z said. Will smiled sadly, wanting so badly to thank them. He felt tears begin to gather at the corner of his eyes.

“Yeah, I hope that he knows, somehow,” Jimmy said, sniffling. “Thanks, Brian,” Jimmy added before raising himself up to plant a soft kiss to Z’s lips. *Oh* . Will hadn’t even known they were together, much less had lived together long enough to adopt his dogs. *Jesus what else did I miss?*

Jimmy and Z corralled the dogs and beckoned them out to the car. Will watched in dismay as the dogs began to protest against being put inside the car. They began to whine and looked back at Will, pulling on their leashes in an attempt to run back to him.

“Go on, guys, go with them,” Will urged, his voice cracking.

Z and Jimmy began to pick up the dogs and place them into the car. Will held his arms close to his chest as he watched them being loaded in. As if sensing his distress, Winston broke away from the rest of the pack and ran back to the porch, sitting directly in front of Will. Will bent down and looked at him, a lopsided smile on his face.

“Hey buddy,” Will said. “You take care of the rest of the pack, okay? And look after Z and Jimmy for me too. You’re such a good boy, I love you, Winston” Will said, reaching out his hand before remembering he wouldn’t be able to feel him and then dropping it dejectedly. Winston cocked his head to the side but seemed to understand Will uncannily well as he stood and trotted back over to the car and hopped in to join the rest of the pack.

Will’s heart sank as he watched Jimmy and Z pull out of the driveway, Winston’s head visibly watching Will through the window. Will reluctantly turned away and materialized back through his door.

With his dogs gone, Will sat on the rug in his living room floor and looked at the empty space where the dog beds should be forlornly. Emotion gripped him tightly and he felt tears begin to stream down his face and sobs began to rack his body. He shakily brought his arms up and wrapped them around himself in a desperate attempt to console himself. But it was no use. He fell to the ground and lay on his side in a fetal position, hugging his knees to his chest.

You took everything from me, Hannibal. You took Abigail. You took my life. You took you.

He wiped angrily at his tears. He wanted nothing more than to make Hannibal pay for everything he had done, for *wrecking* his life. He stood abruptly and walked to the door again and glared at it, willing it to move. It did not.

He began to pace relentlessly. *Surely there has to be a way to move stuff? Ghosts do that shit, don’t they?*

He stuck out his hand, aimed at the door, and tried to open it once again. He shook his head in frustration. But a thought suddenly occurred to him that he may be trying way too big. He moved to his desk and his eyes finally settled on a penny. He held out his hand- feeling incredibly ridiculous- and tried to manipulate energy through his hand that would move the penny.

After several hours of this, when the sun had begun to set, Will felt a surge of anger and mentally told the penny to *move* as his hand gestured at it roughly. Then, to Will's amazement, the penny *moved* . It hadn't moved much, but it had moved. Will grinned, feeling so relieved he could cry tears of joy. With time and practice, Will was sure he'd be able to at least move items around him with some degree of success. Like a *proper* ghost.

As Will laid in bed that night- or rather hovered above it languidly- he resolved that he would learn how to move and manipulate the world around him. And after that, he'd hunt Hannibal down to the ends of the earth and haunt the bastard for the rest of his life.

To Stumble Down the Hall of Your Beginnings

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal placed down his knife gently as he heard the phone ring. He grabbed the phone and accepted the call, hearing nothing on the other end of the line.

"Hello?" he ventured, curious.

A moment's silence and then, "they know," came the sound of Will's voice before the call abruptly ended. Hannibal lowered the phone from his ear slowly, his head spinning. He had already known of Will's betrayal, naturally, but this… *this was an attempt to save me.* Will had decided at the last moment to remain loyal in some small way to Hannibal, to allow him time to escape before Jack and the FBI came knocking.

Hannibal thought it over, his hands returning to their chopping of their own accord. Anger grew steadily within him, he still desired Will to *pay* for his deceit, his initial betrayal, no matter the last ditch effort to protect him. Will had denied Hannibal's most precious gift, and Hannibal would make sure Will hurt just as much as he did.

Hannibal was attempting to control the sheer volume of emotion he felt, an experience so foreign to him. However, the sound of slow footsteps roused Hannibal from his ruminations and he glanced up to see Jack enter his kitchen.

Hannibal's entire life had shifted in the matter of five minutes. He was fully exposed now, having shown his true form to Jack, who now lay bleeding out in the pantry. And Alana- Hannibal had tried to spare her but ultimately encouraged Abigail to defenestrate her, and he now found himself back in his kitchen, walking towards Abigail to comfort her in her distress when he heard the sound of more footsteps slowly approaching the kitchen. He retreated to the shadows, content to watch the scene unfold.

Will came around the corner, gun drawn, soaked to the bone, wet hair plastered to his forehead. Hannibal saw Will glance at the blood by the pantry with a flash of concern before the boy stilled, glancing over his shoulder to the corner where Abigail stood.

"Abigail?" Will asked, slowly lowering the gun as he tried to reconcile the sight of her in front of him with the fact he had thought her dead. Abigail shook, crying as she tried to talk to him.

"I didn't know what else to do. So I did what he told me," she whispered. Hannibal began to walk slowly towards Will from behind, watching Abigail over Will's shoulder.

"Where is he?" he heard Will ask softly. He fixed his eyes on Will then, coming to a stop not three feet behind him. Will began to turn, his voice cracking as he stared up at Hannibal with

wide doe-like eyes.

“You were supposed to *leave* ,” Will said, desperately searching Hannibal’s face. Hannibal ran his eyes over Will’s face. *Even in your betrayal, Will, you are so beautiful.*

“We couldn’t leave you without you,” Hannibal replied, speaking more honestly than he had in a long time. He felt an unfamiliar sensation of pain in his heart, and he tried desperately not to sob from the emotional onslaught.

He stared deeply into Will’s eyes, committing his large pupils and shattering blue eyes to memory as he raised his hand to cup the side of Will’s face. He stroked a thumb over his jaw slowly, savoring the contact with the man in front of him. Will met his gaze the entire time, completely immobile in the moment, desperate to connect with Hannibal. Hannibal gave kissing Will a quick thought but then resolutely decided against it, reminding himself of the extent of Will’s betrayal.

Without another moment of hesitation, Hannibal drove the cruelly curved blade through Will, ripping across his abdomen, finding a satisfying sense of *retribution* as he heard blood pour from Will onto the ground. He felt Will clutch onto his shoulder for balance and his skin burned from where Will’s fingers grasped at him.

He withdrew the blade just as sharply before leaning forward to catch Will and hold him tightly against his body. He placed his shoulder under Will’s chin and held his head to his own, wrapping his hand around Will to cup the back of his head. He felt Will’s blood seep into his shirt, melding with his own skin. Will’s lungs shuttered beneath him and he could feel the erratic heartbeat from where his chest rested against Hannibal’s own.

“Time did reverse. The teacup that I shattered dared to come together. A place was made for Abigail in your world. Do you understand?” Hannibal spoke softly into Will’s ear. Will shook his head against Hannibal’s shoulder.

“A place was made for all of us, together.” Hannibal pulled back to look at Will in his eyes. He felt his person suit slide completely off his body, leaving him bare and exposed to Will. Will gazed at him intently through lidded eyes and Hannibal wanted so desperately for Will to *see* .

“I wanted to surprise you,” Hannibal added. “But you… you wanted to surprise me,” he said, taking a step back and letting Will fall to the floor with a *thud* . He gazed back down at Will, who had pulled himself back to sit against the kitchen cabinets as he clutched at his stomach, trying to slow the bleeding.

Hannibal raised his lips in a snarl, trying to fight the tears forming in his eyes.

“I let you *see* me, know me. I gave you a rare gift, but you didn’t want it,” Hannibal said, his voice breaking as he looked down at the man he had grown to care for more than he had with anyone else in his life, save Mischa.

“Didn’t I?” Will gasped. Hannibal’s anger soothed for a second, considering. Perhaps Will had wanted it, but it hadn’t been enough.

“You would deny me my life,” Hannibal said, wanting to show Will that he was hardly the one at fault when Will wanted to take that from him.

“N-n-no. Not your life, no,” Will said, shaking his head.

“My freedom then, you would take that from me,” Hannibal said, his anger flowing through him as he spat, “Confine me to a prison cell.”

Will didn’t answer him, grunting in pain instead. Hannibal flicked his eyes over him again, reluctant to acknowledge how desperate he was to understand why Will had betrayed him.

“Did you think you could change me? They way I’ve changed you?”

Will raised his head and looked at Hannibal with determination, certainty reflecting in his eyes.

“I already did,” he said quietly before succumbing to another wave of pain. Hannibal mulled the response over in his head before he felt the truth of Will’s statement sink into his bones, right to the core of his heart. Will was right. Will had changed him. *But you have yet to see the worse of me, my dear Will . Allow me to show you, then perhaps you reevaluate.*

“Fate and circumstance have returned us to this moment. When the teacup shatters,” Hannibal said, looking down at Will with his head cocked to the side. “I forgive you, Will. Will you forgive me?”

Hannibal glanced over at Abigail and motioned for her to approach him. He vehemently ignored the protest within his own heart as he gathered the girl to his chest. He could hear Will pleading with him, but the whirlwind of his emotions within his own head and chest drowned him out. Anger gave way to heartbreak and an intense yearning to be seen as he was. He held eye contact with Will as he sliced through Abigail’s neck before letting her fall to the floor roughly. Will sobbed and cried out and Hannibal felt nothing but pleasure at knowing that Will now understood how much he had wounded Hannibal.

Yet Will was so beautiful in suffering, so ethereal covered in blood. Hannibal spared a glance at the daughter he’d just sacrificed so that the man across from him could understand the depth of Hannibal’s affections for him. His heart tore as the pain from what he’d done, from what they’d both done to each other, began to set in. He knelt in front of Will and let a tear fall freely from his eyes.

“You can make it all go away. Put your head back. Wade into the quiet of the stream.”

He gave Will one last look and then walked away, desperate to free himself from the influence Will held over him.

As he walked out of his house, he tilted his head upwards toward the sky, letting the rain wash over him, as if he were cleansing himself of Will.

Yet the farthest he made it without thinking of Will again was a few more paces, where he looked down to find Alana, dying, covered by Will’s coat. Hannibal’s fingers tightened into a

fist as he impulsively thought of wrapping himself in the scent of the other man. He stooped down to pick up the coat and wrapped it around himself, a small comfort, before heading out into the night.

Not twelve hours later and Hannibal Lecter sat on a plane, headed to Paris, with Bedelia by his side. He sipped champagne and pretended that the taste wasn't noticeably more flat than usual, as if his very senses were dulled. He amused himself by tracing his fingers over Bedelia's hand, ignoring the way he could have sworn her hand looked *just like Will's* if only for a second. And he certainly didn't acknowledge the twist in his stomach as he gazed at the girl two rows ahead who did *not look anything like Abigail* .

It was while he was in Paris, working on building new identities for himself and Bedelia, that he saw him. A man who bore a striking resemblance to his Will. Said man made his way over to Hannibal, eyes dancing flirtatiously in the low light of the room.

While Hannial was far from impolite, he extracted himself from Anthony Dimmond's company before too long, finding the similarities to Will too suffocating, especially given that it had only been a few days since he'd last seen Will.

Instead, he vented his frustrations when he murdered Dr. and Mrs. Fell, stealing their identities for himself and Bedelia. And Hannibal could hardly resist his husbandly duty to Bedelia when she offered herself so willingly to him. Hannibal consummated the sham of a marriage with Bedelia, thrusting into her roughly while refusing to acknowledge the deep-seated pain that bloomed in his heart, murmuring Will's name.

Bedelia drifted off into sleep soon after their loveless sex, content to hide within the santcuary of her own dreams. But Hannibal found that sleep eluded him and so he dragged himself to the balcony and walked into the crisp night air. He could see the Eiffel tower from here, a vision that reminded him so much of his time spent here in a Parisian boarding school as a teenager.

Hannibal poured himself a glass of wine and settled into a chair on the balcony, closing his eyes as he inhaled the fragrance of the wine. Yet he was disappointed to find that even wine seemed to have lost its charm, as the flavor was largely lost on him. An image of Will, blood pouring from his stomach and onto his kitchen floor, came unbidden to Hannibal's mind. The sight of his own wine swirled and mixed with Will's blood in the vision, and Hannibal was unsure of what exactly it was he was consuming.

The desperation in Will's eyes- the open and reckless vulnerability- that Hannibal had seen that night in his kitchen stayed with him even as he tried to shake the image from his head. Hannibal felt a sharp wave of pain pierce his heart once again and the heartbreak that engulfed him threatened Hannibal's own understanding of himself. He hadn't foreseen this reaction; he'd expected that with Will properly punished for his betrayal, Hannibal would be able to move on and begin a new life.

And how wrong he was. The pain was worse, and the separation cut into the very center of the heart he hadn't known he'd possessed. *It's okay, Will will find me. Once he's healed and*

recovered, he'll find his way back to me.

Hannibal drained the rest of his wine, the pain in his heart easing slightly as he consoled himself with the knowledge that he'd see Will again. He recalled a conversation he'd had with Will, a story of his beginnings. He'd told Will about his memory palace, and how the foyer was the Norman Chapel in Palermo, Italy. *He'll remember that, and he'll look for me in Italy… I'll forge a new path in Italy and wait for him to find me. As long as it takes* . He nodded to himself and allowed himself a small smile as he booked train tickets for him and "Mrs. Fell" to Florence. He'd wake his 'wife' in the morning with the news they'd be relocating to a more permanent residence in Italy.

***

Will let out an aggravated sigh as he watched the sun rise through the dusty windows of his house. He shifted himself from floating lightly above his bed into an upright position, which also happened to feel much more reminiscent of being alive compared to the feeling of hovering and floating above the bed, unable to feel the softness of his sheets or seek comfort under his covers.

He missed the feeling of sleep. He missed being able to retire from his problems of the day and experience the temporary solace sleep often brought him, even if it was a night filled with nightmares. It would be preferable to the feeling of utter emptiness and purposelessness he felt now.

Though his body didn't necessarily feel pain, it didn't prevent Will from the visceral rip of emotional pain that tore through him as he considered his (lack of) life. He missed his dogs. Will desperately wanting to feel the sweet silkiness of Winston's fur, or smell the light and flowering perfume Alana often wore when she visited the FBI headquarters. Perhaps he even missed the sound of Jack berating him, if only a little bit.

But as much as he missed these simple things of life, nothing compared to the feeling of permanent separation from Hannibal. Will could still see the brokenness in Hannibal's eyes as he gutted him; he could see the heartbreak that covered Hannibal's face as he killed their daughter. Will shook his head, fighting off tears. *If only Hannibal had realized I still wanted to run with him… I risked my own freedom to save him…*

Will hung his head, the loneliness pooling in his chest. He *craved* Hannibal's touch, even if meant he'd be gutted again. At least he'd still be able to *feel* Hannibal's hands on his skin once again. Now he'd never be able to feel the warmth from Hannibal's body as he once had whenever they stood close to one another and shared breaths tinged by black desire. He'd never be able to feel his own heart race under Hannibal's gentle caress or punishing hand. He'd take either, if it meant feeling the man against him again.

But as it stood, Will would never feel the one thing he craved more than anything he had ever wanted, alive or dead. He was to be held prisoner to the earth, doomed to yearn after a man

who had left him to die without a backward glance.

Will walked closer to the window, solemnly staring out across the morning mist hovering above the grass, and he felt a kinship with it. He, too, felt like mist hovering over the earth, present but unacknowledged.

I want him to know me, see me, as he forced me to do with him. I want him to see what he's done to me; I want him to suffer for what he's taken from me. Will mulled over his fiery feelings in his mind, convinced that if he wanted it enough, perhaps he'd one day gain the skill to make himself visible to Hannibal. He was already quite sure his skills with moving objects would improve, seeing as how he'd progressed from being able to move a penny to moving a stack of books in the matter of a few days.

Will glanced towards the stack of three books sitting on his desk that'd he'd been practicing with. With a surge of determination fueled by his simmering anger with Hannibal, Will motioned for a fourth book to join the stack, satisfied when *Arterial Sprays & Pattern Analysis: Get to Know Your Crime Scene* landed neatly on top of the other books.

Will had learned that connection with his emotions was paramount for his power to work. Wading into the stream associated with Hannibal- one full of anger, sadness, and something else unnamed but strong- Will allowed the strength of his feelings to wash over him, filling him with energy. Focusing on the stack of books across from him, he redirected the energy through his chest, down his arm, and through his hand, motioning again for the books to rise.

And rise they did. They rose with his hand, hovering in the air as if awaiting their next command. With his head cocked to the side, Will snapped his hand out to the side, pointing towards the wall opposite him. The energy obeyed him and the books were thrown roughly against the wall with a force Will hadn't known he possessed.

A feeling of intense relief and satisfaction filled Will then, and he allowed himself the first small smile he'd allowed himself in the couple of days since his death. He'd harness this power, he was certain of it. And once he had enough control, he'd find Hannibal and make good on his unspoken promise to make him pay.

After another long night in which Will spent the endless hours trying to entertain himself by progressing from moving a stack of books to a chair (which worked surprisingly well), Will found himself desperate for a change of scenery. So when the sun did rise, Will walked straight through his door and began the long trek to Quantico, VA, in order to check in on Jack.

The walk took several hours, but it was hardly as if Will minded, considering he felt no sense of exhaustion or exertion at all. So instead, he spent the hours walking to Jack within his own memory palace, fishing quietly in his peaceful stream.

Will stood in front of Jack's house, head cocked to the side as he wondered if he'd be able to enter a house that was not his own. *Only one way to find out* . He walked up the steps and crossed the porch before tentatively raising a hand to the door, pleased beyond measure when

he felt himself slip through the door. He pulled the rest of himself through and began searching the house for Jack, at last finding him upstairs lying in bed next to Bella.

“Jack…” she said, her voice raspy with effort. “Just go. You’ll regret it if you don’t. Y-y-you need to be there,” Bella added before succumbing to a harsh bout of coughing. Jack reached for the oxygen mask and tightened it around her head. Finally, he nodded.

“You’re right. I owe it to him. *Shit* ,” Jack whispered, voice distraught. “I’ll be back later. I love you, Bella,” he said as he stood and moved to the closet to pull on a suit. Will glanced at Jack’s neck. It was heavily bandaged but it didn’t seem to have affected him too badly. Will tried to ignore the wave of envy he felt for Jack’s life. *Hannibal left you your life but saw fit to take mine?* Will blinked against the tears that threatened to spill as a fresh wave of hurt passed through him. *I must have truly meant nothing to him* .

While he waited on Jack to get ready for whatever it was he was going to, Will approached Bella and looked down at her. He widened his eyes as he realized he could *feel* how close she was to him, as if she existed in a liminal place between death and life. Curious, he reached out a hand and touched her forehead, letting out a small gasp when he realized he could feel her skin, if only just. It was akin to a whisper, spoken into the wind before it brushed up against you. It wasn’t a strong feeling, but it was more than he’d thought possible.

Bella opened her eyes then and looked at him. Will felt something akin to a chill rush down his spine as her eyes met his.

“Can- can you see me?” he asked her quietly. Bella nodded, sadness etched into her face. She pulled down the oxygen mask slightly so that she could talk.

“You look like a shadow,” she said, her breath rattling. “But one made mostly of light,” she added.” Will swallowed thickly at that.

“This means I’m close, doesn’t it?” Bella whispered after a moment of silence. Will looked down at her, empathy welling within him.

“Yes. I think so,” he replied with a sad smile. She nodded slowly and Will was astounded with the ease in which she accepted her own death. He noticed a readiness in her that he had sorely lacked.

Jack came back out of the closet and Will moved back as Jack came to sit on the edge of the bed beside Bella. Bella smiled up at him before her eyes widened.

“I love you, Jack,” she said, showing a depth of emotion largely uncharacteristic of her. Jack’s breath caught in his throat.

“I love you too, Bella,” he said, leaning down to kiss her softly, once on her lips and once on her forehead before he pulled himself up.

“I have to go. Will’s funeral will be starting soon,” Jack said, turning on his foot as he exited the room, leaving a stunned Will following quickly after him.

Will had managed to sneak into the back of Jack's car (not that it was necessarily hard considering he was a ghost and all) and spent the ride thinking about the absurdity it was that he was about to attend his own funeral.

He followed Jack out of the car when he parked at a small local cemetery. Will scoffed when he saw a total of about five people standing around an open casket positioned close to a freshly dug grave. As they got closer, Will realized the people who were in attendance hardly surprised him, save one.

Jimmy and Z gave Jack a sad smile as Jack came to a stop beside them. Margot offered Jack a polite smile before gazing off distractedly again. Will frowned when he saw a familiar head of red curls standing a bit back from the rest of the group. *Fucking Freddie.*

After exchanging a few polite words, Jack separated from the group and walked up to the open casket. Feeling his stomach clench with uneasiness, Will followed slowly behind him before gathering the nerve to look down at himself.

His face was a certain shade of pale that could only be ascribed to the dead. Will frowned at the deceptively peaceful expression on his face- he was certainly anything but peaceful. The coroner had done a good job of cleaning Will of the blood he'd been covered in, taking care to wash and comb his hair to give the viewers the illusion that in death, Will was 'put together.' His eyes flickered down to his stomach, grateful that a shirt covered the gash that must surely be present. Will was content to not revisit that particular trauma at the moment.

Will zoned out as some random priest droned on about the afterlife, though Will did find himself longing to jump in and shout "you're wrong!" at the man every time he mentioned something about "moving on." When they finally placed Will in the ground and he watched dirt be poured over his casket until the ground was even once again, Will felt nothing. Hannibal had reduced him to nothing but dirt.

Will stayed close to Jack's side as the mourners stared blankly at the grave below them. Will peered closer and realized the headstone had no name. It was blank, as if he had never even existed. Will felt his chest bloom with pain, wondering why he couldn't even be afforded the dignity of a marked grave. Thankfully, Jack soon provided an answer.

"Lounds!" Jack called as Freddie began to inch away from the crowd. The redhead came to a stop before slowly turning around, a fake smile plastered on her face as Jack came to a stop before her.

"To what do I owe the pleasure, Agent Crawford?" she asked sweetly.

"Cut the bullshit, Freddie," Jack said. He pointed his finger at her in warning. "I hope I needn't remind you that you are under the strictest of orders to not communicate *any* detail of Will's death to *anyone* . It's a classified matter, and if you let any information out, I will see you confined to a prison cell for the foreseeable future. Do I make myself clear?"

Freddie narrowed her eyes at him and folded her arms over her chest.

“Yes,” she snapped. “I’m not an idiot. I just don’t necessarily understand why the secrecy? What could you possibly have to gain from keeping Graham’s death a secret?”

Jack sighed, rubbing a hand over his eyes.

“It’s Lecter. The coroners told me that it’s possible Lecter had only intended to wound Will, not kill him. It seems likely that Will expedited his own death by struggling to help Abigail instead of keeping pressure on his own wound. I don’t know. The point is, we aren’t sure if Hannibal is aware that Will died. We want to keep it that way. Have some leverage on him.”

Freddie nodded slowly. Will blinked rapidly, trying to process what he’d just heard. The thought that Hannibal might not know he was dead, that Will hadn’t made it, filled him with a barrage of emotions ranging from anger to sadness to a small hope that Will’s death hadn’t been Hannibal’s intention.

“Even in death, you’d still use Graham as a lure. Perhaps you’re just as insane as the rest of us,” Freddie said, leveling Jack with a glare before she turned and stalked off.

Jack watched her go with a frown before he rejoined the others.

“Alana sends her regards. She’s sad she couldn’t be here, but seeing as she literally cannot move right now, there wasn’t much to be done about that. Anyway, I’m off to keep her company at the hospital for a while. Good evening, gentlemen,” Margot said with a thin smile before leaving as well.

Jack inquired after the dogs, and Jimmy and Z told them they were doing well. Noticeably sad, but they all seemed to have a surprisingly strong bond with Beverly’s cat, and were settling okay all things considered. Will felt a relief pass through him, able to relax knowing that Jimmy and Z would be able to provide them a home with plenty of love. The two men bid Jack a good night and walked away hand in hand, Will looking after them with a sharp pang of longing, knowing that in death he’d missed his chance at love.

Jack stood staring down at the blank gravestone, eyes clouded. He walked forward and tentatively placed a hand on the gravestone before he allowed himself a moment to cry. Tears streamed down his face silently and his shoulders shook as Jack tried to pull himself together. Will watched silently, his stomach feeling like a rock weighing him down.

“It should have been me, Will. I pulled you all into this mess, sent you after him, and you’re the one who paid for it,” Jack said bitterly. He pulled up his shoulders then and looked determinedly down at the headstone. “But I promise you this Will. I will take down that son of a bitch if it’s the last goddamned thing that I do.”

Jack walked away without another word, leaving Will alone with his unmarked grave.

Will spent the next couple of hours traveling to Hannibal's office in Baltimore, Maryland. When he arrived, he stood outside of the building for several minutes, letting his conflicted emotions wash over him. But it was the image of Abigail, bleeding out before his eyes, that eventually propelled Will forward with the courage to face his past.

He materialized through the door to Hannibal's office and he swallowed thickly upon seeing how relatively unchanged the space remained. It was colder, though, without a fire burning in the fireplace and without the warmth radiating from Hannibal as he stood close to Will.

Will approached the center of the room and turned around slowly, taking in every detail he could. *Where are you Hannibal? Where did you go?*

As if summoned, a memory began to surface in Will's mind. He turned to glance over his shoulder and saw himself and Hannibal, standing near a roaring fire as they tossed Hannibal's notes into the flames.

"When we've gone from this life, Jack Crawford and the FBI behind us, I will always have this place," Hannibal said, gazing around his office with fondness.

"In your memory palace?" Will asked.

"My palace is vast, even by medieval standards. The foyer is the Norman Chapel in Palermo. Severe, beautiful, and timeless. With a single reminder or mortality. A skull. Graven in the floor," Hannibal replied.

"All I need is… a stream," Will said with a small smile.

"In those moments where you can't overcome your surroundings, you can make it all go away."

"Put my head back. Close my eyes. Wade into the quiet of the stream."

Hannibal stared into the fire contemplatively.

"If I'm ever apprehended, my memory palace will serve as more than a mnemonic system. I will live there."

Will walked closer to Hannibal, a question in his eyes.

"Could you be happy there?"

"All the palace chambers are not lovely, light and bright. In the walls of our hearts and brains, danger awaits. There are holes in the floor of the mind."

Will glanced down, deep in thought. He leant forward to grab another stack of files, coming into Hannibal's space as he did so. Hannibal leant forward and sniffed him discreetly before he froze and looked at the back of Will's turned face, eyes calculating.

Will sunk to the floor as the memory infiltrated his mind. He anxiously rubbed his hands over his face as he made two major realizations.

The first being that Hannibal must have smelt Freddie on him at that moment. Will hadn't realized at the time, but replaying the memory solidified what his subconscious had picked up on: Hannibal knew Will had betrayed him, lied to him, yet he had still offered to Will that they could run away without killing Jack.

"We could disappear now. Tonight. Feed your dogs, leave a note for Alana, and never see her or Jack again. Almost polite."

Will felt tears form in his eyes and he let them fall silently. Hannibal had given him a second chance, to come clean and still run away with him. Will could've had it all- Abigail would be alive and they would have all left together, as planned. Will's heart ached even more as he realized what he'd lost by following through with his betrayal. He was loath to admit he understood just how much he'd likewise taken from Hannibal in that moment. He'd denied them both the family they'd always wanted.

Whether it was anger, grief, or something else entirely, Will didn't know; yet he felt irrevocably drawn to Hannibal. He yearned to find him, even if he could only communicate with him in ghostly whispers that would surely go unnoticed. Will stood and looked desperately around the room as he allowed his heartache to fill his chest.

The rush of emotion led to an unexpected surge of energy that swept through the room, causing books to fly from their shelves and pages upon pages of paper to rain down all around Will from the ceiling. A fire roared to life in the fireplace and Will stepped back, shocked, as the room before him melded with his memory. He saw the glint of a familiar image on the floor and he dropped to his knees, scattering papers as he pushed them aside to see what lay etched into the floor. There below Will was a skull, graven into the floor.

The second realization clicked into place. Hannibal was in Palermo.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you everyone for reading, commenting and leaving kudos!! Y'all l inspire me to keep writing ❤️

I hope you enjoyed the update!!

Imagos and Ideals

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

So, Hannibal was in Italy . And Will was… here, stuck in purgatory. Will sat next to the skull graven into the floor and hung his head forlornly. *How the hell am I going to get to Italy?* He scoffed at the absurdity of his situation before pulling himself slowly to his feet.

He spared Hannibal's office a second cursory glance, his heart constricting as his eyes landed on the two leather chairs that sat across from each other in the center of the room. With reluctant steps, he made his way over to what had been *his* chair and sat down, breathing in sharply as Hannibal seemed to appear before him, in that wispy way often associated with an image of one forged from memory. *An imago . A concept of an ideal.*

" *I want you to close your eyes, Will. I want you to imagine what you would have liked to happen in this scenario* ," Hannibal said, his voice a mere whisper in the chrysalis of Will's mind. The alarm barely registered in Will's mind as he fell prey to Hannibal's calming cadence. Will obeyed, closing his eyes and leaning his head back as he allowed himself to imagine what he *wished* had happened on that fateful night. The night he lost everything.

Will smiled a thin, polite smile, folding his napkin over his lap as he looked at Jack over the rim of his glasses. Jack sat at the head of Hannibal's table, a steady confidence gracing his face. He raised an eyebrow at Will, as if asking "you ready, son?" Will felt his heart beat faster in anticipation.

Hannibal entered the dining room from the kitchen with a tray laden heavy with a crown roast of pork and various other culinary delights. He placed the tray gently on the table and took his seat across from Will and next to Jack, the three of them seated closely at one end of the table. Jack sat between the two men like a piece of prey dangling between two ravenous predators.

Will raised his eyes to meet Hannibal's and the electricity that sparked within him propelled him toward Jack to his right. He pinned Jack's arm to the chair and gripped his shoulder, holding him in place. Jack turned to Will with a shocked expression of betrayal and dawning horror as he quickly realized Will had chosen Hannibal after all.

Hannibal picked up a knife that lay on the table and slit Jack's throat, arterial spray coating Will's face in the hot viscosity of blood. A traitorous feeling arose within Will and he realized he relished *the feel of Jack's blood on his face. He leant forward to watch in morbid fascination as the light left Jack's eyes before he slumped over and fell to the table, dead.*

Will looked back up to Hannibal then, his heart beating erratically from the high of the kill. His head spinning from the swirl of emotions in his chest- guilt, satiation, contentment; it was too much. Hannibal dropped the knife and pulled Will to his chest, propping Will's chin under

his shoulder as Will clung tightly to Hannibal's side as he shook, as if in pain. Hannibal gripped the back of his head and Will found the feeling to be grounding. As his breathing slowed and began to return to normal, Hannibal began murmuring in his ear.

"I let you see me, know me. I gave you a rare gift. And you, in return, gave me one as well. Not only have I now seen you in the midst of your own radiant becoming, you have allowed me to give you the one thing we both have longed but never hoped for: family. Do you understand?"

Will thought he understood. Hannibal was telling him he considered Will his family. Yet there was something more to Hannibal's tone, something that lurked behind his eyes. Will shook his head in Hannibal's shoulder, clutching to the man tighter as he tried to reign in his emotions.

"A place was made for Abigail in your world, Will. A place for all of us, together."

Will pulled back and looked at Hannibal, his eyes wary. Hannibal simply looked at something over Will's shoulder before placing a hand on Will's shoulder to turn him in the same direction. What Will saw made his eyes widen and words failed him for several moments as he stood gaping at the figure across the room.

But Abigail simply smiled and bounded towards him, throwing herself into his chest to wrap him in a warm hug. Tears began to stream down Will's face as he slowly raised his arms in shock, holding the girl close to his heart.

"Abigail…" Will said, his voice raspy. Abigail pulled back and smiled at him before flashing one over to Hannibal as well. Will turned then to look at the man behind him, who had adorned a small smile himself and looked as if his eyes were brimming with unshed tears. Will swallowed thickly as he looked at the killer across from him, finding nothing but fondness and pleasure in his face.

Will stepped forward and threw his arms around Hannibal, burying his face in the taller man's neck.

"Thank you," Will whispered against Hannibal's skin. Hannibal hummed lightly in response.

"This is all I ever wanted for you, Will. For both of us," Hannibal said, gesturing to both the passionate crime they had just committed together as well as the daughter they now shared once again. Will felt Hannibal's words resonate in his heart and he nodded fiercely, knowing Hannibal had just fulfilled his most earnest desires.

Will blinked his eyes open, his chest aching with a pain so intense that if he weren't already dead, he was sure the distress would have killed him. He made to grip the sides of the chair in frustration but cursed when he felt his hand move through the arm of the chair instead.

The sensation was a bitter reminder that Will was, in fact, dead, and that the vision he'd just imagined was simply what his heart longed for should time ever reverse. Prior to arriving at Hannibal's house that fateful night, Will had been quite unsure where his loyalty lay. It

wasn't until he made the call that he decided it resided with Hannibal. But Hannibal had deemed his outreach too late, and Will had paid the ultimate price. In death, the things he wanted for his life presented themselves with a clarity so startling that it left Will's soul seeping with sorrow and regret.

Will stared blankly at the empty chair across from him, his chest tightening as he realized he missed Hannibal's presence at his side more than he missed his own heartbeat. He wrapped his arms tightly around himself, as if trying to keep his body from shattering from the inside out.

How much time had passed, Will did not know. When he finally roused himself from his grief, he abandoned the leather chair he'd spent so much time in and left Hannibal's office without a second glance.

When he made it out to Baltimore's crisp evening air, his feet did not provide his mind the opportunity to ponder his next steps. Instead, his feet began walking of their own accord, tugging him away from Hannibal's office and down the darkening streets of the city.

An hour later, Will stood in Chandler Square, staring at Hannibal's house as unease settled in his stomach once again. As if on cue, rain began to fall from the sky and although the drops fell right through Will, he could almost feel the wetness against his skin, awakening memories of the night in question.

As Will made his way to the front door, he saw a faint outline of an injured Alana, covered in glass. Will couldn't help the envy that surged within him when he remembered Alana had lived; she'd been given a second chance at life. And here Will was, haunting the very place in which he'd taken a shaky breath for the last time.

He passed through the door and walked slowly to the kitchen, noting how the FBI had clearly been through the place, scouring for evidence. Not that it mattered. Hannibal would never allow himself to be caught, even by the hands of a very determined Jack Crawford. Will tried to ignore the irritation that bubbled up when he noticed the mess the FBI had left in Hannibal's kitchen, tools and papers scattered about that were hardly returned to their rightful place.

Will sank to the kitchen floor and leaned against the wall behind him, grateful that his energy was stable enough right now to prevent him from passing through the wall itself. He released a sigh and opened *that* door in his memory palace, releasing the faint outlines of Hannibal and Abigail into the kitchen before him as his eyes replayed the scene from that night.

As Will watched with grim determination, tears brimmed in his eyes as he saw Hannibal's heart break before him once again. Anger rose within Will as he saw Abigail drop to the ground. And a keen mixture of rage and yearning filled him when he watched Hannibal kneel before him and allow a tear to drop to the floor, a silent offering of the sincerity of his emotions.

But as the blood began to swell across the floor, and Hannibal turned to leave the room, the sound of his footsteps receding seemed to grow louder rather than softer, as if someone was walking into the room instead. Confused, Will glanced at the kitchen door and the scene before him immediately vanished, leaving Will alone in the kitchen, save the figure now standing at the door.

Abigail wore a soft smile as her eyes raked over him with curiosity and sadness. Her figure emanated a soft glow and she bore no scar on her neck, her ghostly form stunning in its ethereal innocence. She crossed the room and took a seat beside him, glancing up at him with a question in her eyes.

"All this time… where have you been?" she asked. Will's eyebrows knit together in confusion.

"My home, mostly. My grave. Jack's house, Hannibal's office. Couldn't bring myself to revisit this place quite yet," Will said gruffly. Abigail stared at him blankly.

"You can move from place to place?" she asked softly.

"I, uh, yeah… I suppose so. I just… walk around, mostly," Will said, still puzzled at what Abigail was hinting at. Another sad smile flitted across her face before she gazed distractedly at the kitchen once again.

"I can't leave this house," she said, voice almost a whisper. "I'm… stuck here, Will. I can't walk out that front door, as hard as I tried. At first, I had assumed you were alive when I didn't find you stuck in here with me. But then I overheard Jimmy and Z talking about your funeral and I didn't know where you were, or if you'd be able to come to me at all. Thought perhaps you'd been able to move on. But it seems like you found me at last," Abigail said with a pained grimace. Will shook his head.

"I… I don't understand. I can leave my house and move around just fine. I don't understand why you're trapped here," Will said, a concerned glance gracing his face. His heart hurt at seeing Abigail's misery.

"I didn't understand this whole time either. Though now that you're here, I think I know why I've been trapped here," she said. Another sad smile.

"Why, Abigail? Are you stuck here because you can't move on? Because you're still tethered to… *him?* " Will asked. She shook her head in response, her blue eyes widening as her gaze flickered over Will's face.

"No… I'm stuck here because I think I've been tethered to you, Will. I think I've been waiting for you to find me here," she said. Will's heart dropped and his eyebrows rose in alarm. Abigail just shook her head and continued on.

"When I died, I didn't feel rage towards Hannibal. I was already dead when he took me in. I died when my father took that knife to my neck. Ever since then, I was just a dead person whose body was living on borrowed time. So, no, I didn't blame Hannibal, not really.

“But you, Will... I couldn’t move on knowing what I’d done to you. I’m so sorry I didn’t try harder to reach out to you, to let you know Hannibal’s plan-” she started to sob, her breaths coming in harsh gasps. “Like I said, I didn’t know what else to do, so I just did what he told me. And because I didn’t do more- because I didn’t let you know I was alive- I’m the reason you’re dead, Will. It’s all m-m-my f-fault,” she said, crying harder now. Will immediately shook his head and closed the distance between them, shushing her softly.

“Hey, hey, none of that now,” he said. He reached a hand out to her hesitantly, not knowing if he’d be able to touch her. She watched him curiously as he brought his hand down to her shoulder, both smiling as they felt the warmth pass between them.

It was a greater warmth than what the living could even experience. Will enveloped Abigail in his arms, holding her to his chest tightly. She clung on to his shirt and let her tears flow freely, sniffling in an attempt to compose herself.

“It’s not your fault, Abigail,” Will said fiercely. He pulled back to look down at her, using his thumb to brush tears off her cheek. He paused briefly to marvel at the sensation of being able to *touch* someone again, to feel the warmth and softness of another’s skin. He swallowed thickly. “What *Hannibal* did to me has *nothing* to do with you. I betrayed him, and he used you to wound me. The blame is not yours to shoulder, but mine alone.”

“But-” Abigail began but Will quelled her with a stern look. Will took in her anguish-ridden face, her anxious eyes, the guilt that hung like a yoke upon her shoulders. He gripped her shoulders and forced himself to meet her eyes imploringly.

“I don’t believe in promises- they require too great an expectation of humanity- but I will make an exception for you, Abigail. I *promise* you that my death is *not* your fault. I want you to move on from this place, to sever that which tethers you to me. Can you do that for me?”

Abigail’s doe-like blue eyes met his, searching for assurance and finding it in what she saw. She slowly nodded, silent tears streaming down her face, shortly joined by fear of the unknown. Will was reminded of the fear that had painted her face as she looked at him in Minnesota shortly before he had vomited her ear.

“You were so afraid of me, the last time I saw you, before that last time I saw you” Will said, donning a sad smile.

“It was never you I had to be afraid of, Will,” Abigail said. A pained look settled on Will’s face despite his best attempts at concealing it. She spared him a sympathetic glance.

“We were all supposed to leave together. He made a place for us. He gave you a chance to take it all back, and you kept lying. Why did you lie to him, Will?” Will’s heart seized at the bitter reminder of his own betrayal.

“The wrong thing being the right thing to do was too ugly a thought,” he said. “But in the retrospection granted to me by Death themself, I see that the only ugliness was in the betrayal of my own sincerest desires. I tried to choose him, in the end. I wanted to run away with him,” Will said, flashing a self-deprecating half-smile at Abigail. She cocked her head to the side in interest.

“After everything he’s done, you’d still go to him?” she asked, no judgement apparent in her tone. War raged in Will’s soul as he debated his answer, part of him wanting to find a way to move on, to leave this place, but a much bigger part of him felt hopelessly drawn to the man who now resided a world away, across the sea.

“Yes,” Will whispered. Abigail gave him an intense look then, her eyes calculating.

“What is it, Abigail? What are you not saying?” Will asked, his voice tight. She glanced down at the floor for a minute before she finally sighed, unable to resist answering him.

“Jimmy and Z said something else when they were here tearing through Hannibal’s things. They were talking about the way Hannibal… cut you. They said that it had been surgical, precise even. He wanted you alive, Will.”

“He left me to die,” Will said sharply, not daring to hope the words she said to be true.

“I don’t think so,” Abigail said softly. “Z and Jimmy said that the ambulance driver had taken what he thought was a detour, only for it to add on an extra half hour to your trip… you bled out in the ambulance, Will. Hannibal had only left when he’d heard ERT arriving. He’d known the time to the hospital, Will… had the driver not taken the wrong route, you’d still be here, as Hannibal intended.”

Will felt his breath falter and he seemed to choke on the emotion that welled up in his chest. *Oh god, please let it be true.* He shook his head vehemently, still in shock. Abigail watched him sadly for a few moments and Will simply stared back at her, his expression reflecting the grief he felt deep within his soul. *He’d wanted me alive… He thinks I’m still alive.* He remembered Jack had said something at his funeral that similarly confirmed this theory, and he coughed roughly as sobs threatened to break free from his lungs. He took several steadying breaths and after several quiet moments, Abigail spoke softly to him again.

“What are you going to do when you find him?” Abigail asked next. Flashes of summoning enough energy to kill Hannibal- even if it could not be with his physical hands- appeared behind his eyes, the images glorious in their bloodlust. Yet other images emerged from his subconscious as well, images in which Will reached for the ghost of Hannibal’s embrace and the comfort of his words ringing in his ears. Will heaved a distressed sigh.

“I’m curious about that myself,” he said honestly.

Abigail nodded, studying Will closely.

“I feel the presence of my own tether disintegrating in the same space I feel the strength of yours growing. Will- you’re tethered so tightly I don’t know that you can ever move on.”

Will’s eyes snapped to hers at that and he found nothing but truth in her words.

“Maybe I won't get to move on. I don’t know if I can save myself. Maybe that’s just fine,” Will said softly, looking at the ground to avoid her sympathetic glance. There’s something more in Abigail’s eyes, but she seems content to let it go unvoiced, confident that Will would find the truth in his own time. She cleared her throat.

“I believe this is where I leave you, Will. Will you walk me out?”

Will smiled at her and offered her his arm, which she took a hold of, her face already lifting with the hope that was rising in her soul.

Will walked her to the door and they stood before it for a second, both silently contemplating the horror of what lay behind them and the uncertainty that lay ahead. With a questioning glance and a returned nod, Will led them through the door, Abigail passing through this time without difficulty.

She smiled, tears of relief brimming in her eyes. She wrapped him in a final hug before she stepped back, determination set in her face. She began walking away from him before she paused and looked at him over her shoulder.

“The ‘wrong thing being the right thing to do’ doesn’t exist in your world anymore, Will. There is no ‘wrong’ and ‘right’ in the realm you now inhabit. Don’t let such ideas prohibit you from doing what feels most authentic for you when you see him again,” she said. And with that, she turned back around and began walking down the street, her form slowly fading until it dissipated into thin air.

Will stared into the now empty street with a soft sigh. His mind reeled from his encounter with Abigail, and a bitter sweetness settled in his chest as he realized she had left him behind too, in her journey to move onwards. Glancing back at Hannibal’s house, Will spared a thought for Beverly, wondering if she too had ‘gone on.’ He assumed she had, given her lack of presence in Hannibal’s house. Beverly wasn’t exactly the type to remain tethered to anything in the realm of the living.

Knowing now that he was truly alone, he knew the only thing holding him to this earth was Hannibal. In taking his life, Hannibal had somehow simultaneously placed himself in the center of Will’s entire universe; he had made himself the sole reason for Will’s continued existence in this spectral form. *I have to return to him. I have to find a way to Italy* .

Will headed back to his home in Wolf Trap, thoughts of repairing his sailboat in preparation for voyage on his mind.

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Hannibal smoothed the lapels of his suit as he flashed a polite smile at the head curator at the *palazzo capponi.*

“Ah, *dottore* Fell, so pleased you could make it here today,” the curator smiled. He gestured around at the Exhibition of Atrocious Torture Instruments, Hannibal following his gaze with keen interest.

“Your experience speaks for itself, *dottore* . You are exceptionally well qualified for curating our exhibit, and we would be very fortunate to have you, should you accept the position,” the man said, his eyebrows raised in a question.

“I would take immense pleasure in curating at your exhibition, *signor* ,” Hannibal replied smoothly. The man nodded his appreciation.

“Your predecessor was talented, surely, but I am confident we are better off with you anyway,” he said. “Rumor has it that he eloped with his mistress and her money. I do hope you have no similar plans, *dottore* Fell.”

Hannibal smiled blankly, fondly remembering the predecessor in question. The very same one he’d taken a knife to and fed to himself and Bedelia for dinner last week.

“Of course not. My wife and I have plans to settle in Florence for quite some time,” Hannibal said, his own thoughts wandering traitorously to the Botticelli-esque man of dark curls and piercing blue eyes who would surely be making a voyage to the ancient city in the coming months in pursuit of Hannibal himself.

The curator led him out of the building with a smile.

Hannibal stood in the midst of his extravagantly decorated Florentine apartment and yet he could not manage to see the beauty in the room that he had once been able to detect. Instead, the colors appeared more muted, growing dimmer with each day that passed. And though the sun shone brightly through the open windows, the shadow of storm clouds seemed to brew over Hannibal’s brow.

“You look like a man who’s seen a ghost,” Bedelia drawled slowly, gazing at Hannibal contemplatively as she nursed a glass of wine. Hannibal did not bother to return her gaze.

“Individuals, when contemplated solely in our minds rather than occupying shared air space, are ghosts in their own way- always out of reach, like silhouettes constructed on the wisps of sentimentality.”

“Is Will Graham such a ghost, a spectre built on sentiment alone?”

“Will Graham is no ghost. In my memory palace, his face is the most vivid. I still smell his scent, and can faintly hear the beating of his heart. He resides within me, almost more tangible than memory alone,” Hannibal said faintly, averting his eyes from Bedelia, choosing to gaze at the Florentine skyline. *I cannot wait to show you Florence, Will* .

“You expect him to come to you,” Bedelia said some minutes later, realization dawning on her face. “Will you lure him here, or will he descend on you of his own predatory volition?”

Hannibal frowned. Bedelia did not allow him the chance to answer.

“Your relationship with Will Graham is built upon reciprocity. You tried to kill him in Baltimore; perhaps he will try to kill you in Florence.”

“I did not try to kill Will Graham in Baltimore. I cut him precisely, surgically. I knew he would not die. I cannot kill Will just as Will is similarly hindered in his ability to kill me. Perhaps he will come to give me a *matching scar* .”

“To wound and to be wounded is an intimate dance between two partners. I wonder, Hannibal, when the time will come for your last dance with him.”

Hannibal glanced at her sharply.

“I have no intention of ever relinquishing my dancing partner; for surely even in death, Will and I would remain dancing just the same.”

Bedelia raised her eyebrows but did not proceed to comment, for which Hannibal was immensely grateful. He was too distracted by his own feelings to adequately deal with more of Bedelia’s snarky commentary.

It had been about a month now since Hannibal’s departure from Baltimore, and he was loath to admit to himself that the pangs in his chest were from emotional distress caused by his separation from Will.

The shadow around Hannibal drew itself inward, dark wings seeming to fold over himself in a desperate attempt at protection. Hannibal refused to concede he was already missing Will’s presence so acutely, so he gathered what strength he could muster to repress his feelings, turning himself towards Bedelia with the intent of inflicting further psychological torment on her in reaction to the way she had seen him *too* clearly on the matter of Will Graham.

Later that evening, Hannibal washed Bedelia’s hair slowly, his hands softly shampooing each strand with utmost attention to detail. She hummed in contentment and he took the opportunity to reach further down, cupping the base of her skull in his large hands with just enough pressure to remind her exactly where she was- in the hands of a killer, alive by his mercy alone.

He smirked internally as she shivered, knowing that Bedelia had realized the intention behind his grip and had found it intriguing if not arousing. He supposed she would be amusing enough to toy with for some time, not to mention she did often provide him an ideal sounding board for working through the complexity of his own thoughts. *Yet her light is but a flickering candle while my dearest Will is the Sun himself; I would lose myself in the pursuit of his radiance and would smile from the scorch of his flames.*

It wouldn’t be long now; of that, Hannibal was confident. ERT had been on their way when Hannibal had left Will in his house, and Will hadn’t been bleeding quickly enough to cause concern when Hannibal had made his way to the front door. Hannibal estimated that between six and eight months, Will would be fully recovered, Hannibal’s mark carved beautifully into his belly, and then he would make his way across the Atlantic to be reunited with Hannibal once again.

Chapter End Notes

thank all of you beautiful people for reading !!! I appreciate all of your comments, kudos, & hits!

more to come soon!! <3

Interlude for Lithuania

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

SIX MONTHS LATER

Will Graham had never prided himself on his adaptability, seeing as he had spent most of his life fighting change, even when his very bones called out for transformation. Death, however, had not provided Will any other option besides to adapt to the circumstances he now found himself in as well as he possibly could.

Given that there was quite literally nothing else to do in addition to his own burning desire to hunt down Hannibal at last, Will had spent every day of the last several months expanding upon his power. While he had not yet discovered the ability to make himself seen or heard by the living, he had enhanced every other facet of his power, making him a formidable phantom if ever there was one.

Will had naturally spent most of this time at his old home, grateful that the county hadn't found the need to reclaim the property and sell it. The obscurity of the location provided Will a way to work on repairing his sailboat without neighbors raising their eyebrows at floating tools and engine parts as the pieces of the boat slowly came back together.

Will had always known himself to be a deeply emotional man, no matter how hard he had tried to repress and hide it at times. His empathy only further exacerbated that fact and it was those very emotions that Will now tapped into to fuel his energy exertion whenever he desired to make something happen.

He replayed memories of Abigail, sometimes, which provided a sentiment strong enough for lifting and manipulating lighter objects, such as his tools. Much to his chagrin, however, Hannibal remained his primary source of fuel- memories of him facilitating emotional charges powerful enough for Will to lift the entire sailboat if he so desired. Even in his physical absence, Hannibal seemed to provide a sort of emotional well in which Will could endlessly extract the energy source he needed.

After several of these arduous months, Will had finally managed to repair his sailboat so that it was ideal for an international voyage. He was able to access his computer and arrange for a towing company to come and pick up the sailboat and deliver it to the Port of Chesapeake, one of the smallest and relatively isolated ports in Virginia. The tow truck came on Wednesday as scheduled and Will hopped into the boat unseen, satisfied as they made their way across the state.

Several hours later, the driver unloaded Will's sailboat into one of the empty docks in the marina, leaving without a second glance. Will sat on the edge of the boat, his feet dangling and passing through the water below, and thought about the journey ahead. It'd be easy enough to sail across the ocean, the open waters providing ideal privacy that wouldn't bring speculation to an unmanned ship. The winds would do most of the work and Will would only need to rely on minimal energy to manipulate the sails and steering when necessary. It would take about a month and a half for the sailboat to reach his destination.

Will waited until night fell and the marina was eerily quiet, fog settling lightly upon the black water. A full moon hung in the sky, its luminescence reflecting on the slight waves that rocked the sailboat at its dock. Will powered on the small lights along the hull of the ship, enough so that a light glow illuminated the water so that Will could carefully navigate his way out of the harbor.

Tapping into that seemingly endless well of emotional energy courtesy of the trauma inflicted by Hannibal, Will pushed the sailboat away from the dock and out into the marina before jumping aboard the deck himself. To any onlooker, they would be amazed to find the sails raising themselves, the wheel adjusting itself minutely as the boat made its way through the marina and out to sea. Will was hardly amazed, but he was silently grateful for the peaceful night and the opportunity to explore something he had so enjoyed when he was alive.

Because Will didn't require time for sleep or eating, the length of the trip was shortened considerably, taking about a week less than what would normally be expected of a solo sailing trip. Three weeks after leaving the Port of Chesapeake, Virginia, Will found himself nearing France, sparing a thought of Hannibal attending his boarding school in Paris as a young man. *I bet he was every bit the pretentious ass even then* .

He sailed along the English Channel before making his way through the North Sea, for once pleased that his undead state protected him from the cold as he rounded Denmark. After sailing through the twists of Copenhagen, he finally made it to the Baltic Sea before finding a quiet place to dock his vessel on the coast of Lithuania.

Will knew Hannibal was in Italy, of course, but something Abigail had said had stuck with him. Knowing that she, in addition to Jack, Z, Jimmy, and the coroners, had thought that Hannibal intended for him to be alive had sent Will into distress. Will *needed* to know more about Hannibal, to *see* him even more clearly, before he could actually set his eyes on the man again. He secretly hoped that by unearthing Hannibal's past, it could give him clarity for what Will should do with Hannibal's future.

Aukštaitija was on the far side of Lithuania. After securing his boat at his hidden alcove on the coast, Will walked to the nearest city and boarded a train, sitting in one of the many empty seats in the rear car. He watched the people around him- children smiling, adults laughing, lovers kissing- and felt a pang in his heart as he watched Life dance before him. He

longed to reach out and taste that flavor again, the flavor of blood pumping in your veins and knuckles cracking after being put to work. Sightless eyes passed over him and Will felt his loneliness like a brick in his stomach. The train inched its way through the region of Samogitia before it came to a stop in Aukštaitija, where Will then departed from the train and began the trek to Lecter Castle.

Three days later, Will stood outside the gates of Lecter Castle, his head tilted in quiet amazement as he studied the expansive castle sitting atop a cliff on a massive plot of land. Even though Will counted himself among the dead, he couldn't help the shiver that ran down his spine as he gazed across the dreary land. Mist hung heavy in the sky and wildlife grew freely over the gates in a clear sign of neglect. Slipping through the gate, Will began his slow walk across the grounds.

The forest too seemed eerily silent. Dead leaves fell from the trees and Will felt a vague sense that this whole castle was a graveyard. He wondered how many of the ghosts that surely resided within these borders were Hannibal's own victims.

The grey sky began to darken even more as the sun began its descent from its throne. In the gloomy light of the evening, Will stopped abruptly as he rounded a corner and entered into a small garden, complete with an old stone fountain at its center. Fireflies covered the garden, their tiny bulbs of brightness a simple reminder of the beauty inherent in life. Will circled the garden in amazement, his jaw gaping slightly, as he felt himself surrounded by the light.

The fireflies seemed to be drawn to the fountain itself, so Will bent forward and studied the structure, amused to find its surface coated with snails. A distant memory of a dinner at Hannibal's reminded Will that Hannibal had kept cochlear gardens as a child; the place where Will now stood had once been a sanctuary to Hannibal as a boy. Will felt a ridiculous surge of affection, his heart soothed by the fact that Hannibal had always been attracted to beauty and aesthetics. This garden was an homage to that.

As Will sat upon the edge of the fountain's bench and admired the castle with the grey sunset behind it, he began to feel a sensation akin to what one feels when being watched. He froze as he heard a child's bubbling laughter, the light notes a sharp contrast to the stillness in the air.

Will raised himself to his feet, peering into the trees around him. It was too dark to really see anything, but the giggle behind him caused him to turn sharply, and his eyes widened at what he saw. Across the clearing was a girl, no more than three or four years old, smiling brightly at him. She wore a simple white dress and her blonde hair hung in slight curls around her face like a halo. She had a light shine about her, the edges of her form shimmering in the darkness of the night.

The girl laughed again and ran around to the other side of the fountain, hiding herself behind it. Will was too stunned to speak, barely managing a shocked laugh when the girl poked her head around the fountain to look at him, before she dived behind it again in suppressed laughter.

Will slowly rounded the fountain, his brain calculating quickly. *Surely not....*

“Hello,” Will said quietly, offering the girl a small smile. She immediately ducked her head shyly, nervously twisting her foot in the dirt as she did so.

“It’s alright,” Will said softly. “Uh, my name is Will,” he began awkwardly, crouching down to be closer to her height. She shot him a curious look before swaying in circles again, debating if she should answer. She hopped down from the fountain’s ledge and landed silently on the ground. Will watched in curiosity as she bent over the ground, drawing in the dirt. When she stepped back, Will felt his breath catch in his throat. Upon the ground, she’d drawn the letter *M* in broad strokes. He gazed down at her quietly and she flashed him a delighted smile.

“M is for Mischa!!” she squealed, before dashing off towards the treeline. She paused and looked back at him expectantly. He shook himself out of his reverie and followed her. When he caught up to her, she reached up, grabbing at his hand. Will looked down and felt his heart clench when he saw the tiny hand wrapped tightly around his, lamenting the fact that she’d been *so young* when she died.

The tiny hand was so soft and warm in his, and it brought out a protective streak in him as he sought to ease this girl’s pain, to help her let go of whatever it was that held her to this godforsaken earth. Mischa, however, had much more simpler thoughts on her mind and settled for pulling him towards the castle, jumping over every rock they encountered along the way.

When Will paused at the massive double oak doors at the entrance to the castle, Mischa frowned as she looked up at him.

“Where are you taking me, Mischa?” Will asked softly.

“‘Anniba!” she said, her amber-brown eyes unnervingly similar to Hannibal’s as they studied Will. *Anniba? ....Oh. Hannibal.* Will just nodded tightly and allowed himself to be led inside by the determined toddler in front of him.

The castle was even larger on the inside, its abandoned halls frescoed with cobwebs spun from loneliness. The castle appeared to have been ransacked decades ago, for nothing of value really seemed to remain behind and what furniture remained had been overturned and strewn about this place in disregard.

Mischa first led Will to what must have been her room before whatever disaster had struck here had occurred. Mischa smiled brightly as she pointed to a small wooden figure sitting on a table near her child-sized bed. The wooden figurine had been whittled and carved into a swan, it’s curved neck bowed elegantly.

“Er, it’s very nice, Mischa,” Will said, still lamenting over how awkward he felt around children. But as he glanced at the skill apparent in the craftsmanship of the swan, he couldn’t help asking Mischa who had made it for her, having a feeling he already knew who.

“‘Anniba!!” she squealed again, smiling brightly. Her eyes showed such devotion, such love for Hannibal, that Will felt nauseous thinking about the fact that Hannibal had at the very least eaten Mischa, if not killed her. She was such an innocent soul and Will felt the familiar swell of righteous anger within him as he contemplated revenge for Mischa’s sake alone. As if sensing Will’s budding anger, Mischa grasped his hand with her tiny hand once again, pulling him to the next room.

The next room Will walked into was in similar disarray, evidence of paintings having been torn from the walls remained. But based on the ancient vanity, several hairbrushes, and the large bed, Will assumed the room had belonged to Hannibal’s mother, the Countess Lecter. He peered over some sketches that lay in the corner, surprised to find that many of them were of Italy. Florence especially was featured repeatedly, and Will wondered if perhaps the Countess was of Italian descent herself. Mischa amused herself by jumping on her mother’s bed, her form falling from the air with an otherworldly slowness.

Mischa then dragged Will on to a final room, Hannibal’s. Will hesitantly took a step into the place, marveling at the simplicity in the room before him. There wasn’t an abundance of personal touches, but Will quickly found Hannibal’s sketches he’d made as a boy, many depicting swans or gesture drawings of Mischa in play. Will smiled softly and felt his heart reach into the air, as if wishing to absorb any life-force of Hannibal’s that hung in the air from decades previous. Will suddenly had the sensation of starvation, though the feeling was felt on a soul rather than physical level. *Hannibal. I feel closer to you, here. When we are reunited at last, will you be able to feel me, too?*

Will obligingly followed Mischa throughout the house as the toddler rambled on in half-gibberish about her family. When they walked back into the courtyard, Msicha directed Will to her grave and Will gave her a sorrowful smile. The girl sat down in front of her grave and stared at it forlornly, her tiny hands propping up her chubby face. Will lowered himself to the ground next to her. Fireflies cast flickering lights among the tall grass as the two sat in silence for several moments before Will spoke again.

“Mischa,” Will said softly, hating himself for even asking this question but knowing he didn’t have a choice, not if he wanted to help her. “Who killed you?”

Mischa’s wide amber eyes turned on him and Will feared she couldn’t understand his question. But then she looked back at her grave in curiosity and Will nodded, urging her onward.

“Who?” Will said, glancing pointedly at Mischa’s grave. Fear passed over the girl’s face and she looked as if she were about to cry, her lips forming a pout.

“Was it Hannibal?” Will asked, his heart beating faster in anticipation, dreading the answer. Mischa’s curls bobbed as her head whipped up to stare at him, shaking her head adamantly.

“Who, then?” Will asked, not unaware of the way his shoulders slumped in relief with the knowledge Hannibal hadn’t killed this precious girl.

Mischa bit her lip in thought before she pulled herself up again. She clung on to Will's hand tightly as she led him back to the house. Will was further confused when she led him through the door heading to a wine cellar rather than into the house.

Blinking to adjust to the dim lighting of a few candles burning lowly along the wall of the cellar, Will came to a stop when he saw a caged man on the other end of the room. The man was old, certainly, but also was clearly way past the point of starvation, little more than skin and bones. He shook in the chill night air and his chains rattled as he paced around the tiny cell. Will came closer and peered down at the man, disgust filling him when he thought of how this man had killed the young child. How he had killed Hannibal's sister.

"This is the man who killed you, Mishca?" Will asked, turning back to look at the little girl, whose face had suddenly twisted into one of fury as she glared at the man. Mischa nodded without looking at Will, her eyes holding a contempt she felt deeply despite her inability to articulate it.

Will glanced back at the man and slowly the realization slid into place in his mind. This man was Mischa's prisoner. She'd harnessed enough power to keep him locked up, enough power to slide snails through the bars for the man to eat to slowly prolong his life (and torture). It was the only way Mischa was able to haunt her killer as a form of holding the man accountable for his actions.

"He is your prisoner," Will stated, looking to Mischa for confirmation. Mischa merely nodded again, tears brimming in her eyes.

"Hurt me. Hurt 'Anniba," Mischa said, her tiny hands clenched into fists with all the rage afforded to grievously wronged children.

"I know, Mischa. I'm so sorry. Is it this man who keeps you tethered here? Is he why you haven't been able to find peace?" Will looked at her imploringly, eyes blown wide with concern. Mischa seemed to understand him uncannily well for she nodded slowly, eyes still fixated on the man.

"Stuck," she said simply. Will nodded sympathetically, his mind racing. *Mischa isn't strong enough to get rid of him, she can't kill him herself, she's too pure, too innocent… Perhaps if I kill him, she'll be free…*

"Mischa," Will said some minutes later. "Will you be free when this man dies? Will you finally find peace?"

Mischa's owlish gaze turned to him once again but she didn't answer his question, only offering an uncomfortable shrug. Will glanced back at the prisoner again and made his mind up quickly, scooping Mischa into his arms and settling her on his hip before carrying her out of the cellar and into the garden. He gently lowered her to the ground and tucked a stray curl behind her ear.

“Stay,” he told her gently. “Play with Hannibal’s fireflies, yeah?” he said, gesturing to the dazzling lights that glittered like stars around them. She gave him a small smile at that and when she began to wander among the flickering bugs, Will made his way quietly back to the cellar.

Will crouched in front of the bars, invisible, and studied the man on the other side. His hair fell in tattered clumps and his eyes were soulless, his face gaunt. He looked more dead than Will felt. But Will could also see the man’s sins written in the lines across his face; his atrocities hung heavy in the air that he breathed. His hands dripped with the bittersweet blood of Mischa’s innocent soul. *If your death sets Mischa free, I have no qualms paying that price* .

Will hadn’t contemplated murder after he died, with the glaringly obvious exception of Hannibal. As for everyone else, Will hadn’t really cared enough to spare a second thought, but this man was proving to be another exception. Will was surprised to notice he didn’t hold an ounce of guilt at the thought, the only emotion within him being that of expanding righteous anger. He spared a thought of a young Hannibal, drowning in the grief of his dead sister, and felt the flash of rage flare within him. The flames fanned in his chest until they combusted, sending a wave of pure, hot energy throughout the room, shattering all of the wine bottles along the wall.

The glass shards cascaded down to the floor, their destruction sounding like the light notes of a musical symphony composed on tinkling glass. Will glanced over his shoulder to see the dark red wine spilling across the floor and he longed to see the same sight flow from the man in the cell. His eyes focused on the glass shards and with a quick thought and a flick of his wrist, he sent the shards flying into the man, the glass ripping apart the man’s flesh with deep lacerations and gashes. *Death by a thousand cuts is fitting for the likes of you.*

Blood seeped from the man and he fell to his knees, rivulets of red streaming down his skin. The man gasped, eyes wide, but couldn’t even manage a hoarse cry as the glass buried itself deeper into the cuts as if they were becoming one with his body. His blood pooled on the floor and swirled into the wine, and Will knew if he were alive, he’d been tempted to drink it. After a few more gasps, the man slumped over, dead, and Will stared, unfeeling, at the empty eyes for a few moments and then he began to work.

An hour later, Will took several steps back and marveled at the tableau he had just created, a warmth spreading in his chest as he thought of how he meant the tableau as a homage to Hannibal, and a testament to his own becoming.

Mischa’s killer now hung from the ceiling of the cellar, bound tightly in twine, his hands situated in front of him as if in prayer, praying for the forgiveness of his most grievous sins. Radiating out from the body were massive wings made of the glass shards, so that they were illuminated when the light of the candles flickered through them, giving the overall appearance of a firefly. *A fully formed insect. An imago. An image of a loved one, buried in the subconscious. A concept of an ideal* . Will’s heart tightened as he wished Hannibal could

see his creation, a deep part of him craving Hannibal's approval and appreciation of what Will had done. For Mischa. For Hannibal. For Will, too.

Mischa had ultimately grown curious and weaved herself back into the basement. Will startled when he saw the girl come to a stop beside him. He hadn't intended for her to see it, but perhaps she would be able to find peace in the horrific beauty of the display. She didn't react much, just turned to Will with a curious gaze. He knelt down on the ground beside her and pulled one of her tiny hands into his, holding it comfortingly.

"He can't hurt you anymore, Mischa. He's gone, forever. Your tether is gone. You can rest in peace, now," Will said, forcing himself to maintain eye contact with the wide deep brown eyes. Mischa tilted her head, a frown on her face.

"'Anniba?" she asked, concern apparent in her tone.

"Don't worry about Hannibal, Mischa. He loves you very, very much. He would want you to move on, not be trapped here," Will replied, his voice breaking as he tried to choke down his own tears. But Mischa wasn't sad. Instead, she smiled widely before bursting through the castle doors again, running to grab her wooden swan. She wanted to take it with her.

Will met Mischa back in the firefly garden. Kneeling down to her height, Will opened his arms and Mischa ran to him, hugging him tightly. She didn't seem to notice the way tears streamed down his face or the way his breath shook as he tried to comfort himself against the onslaught of heartache he felt on Hannibal's behalf. Mischa pulled back from him and, clutching the swan closely to her chest, walked into the swarm of fireflies until her silhouette too glowed brightly before it dissipated into the air.

Will spent his train ride back through Lithuania thinking of Mischa, which naturally led to thoughts of Hannibal. He begrudgingly admitted that while the events of Mischa's death didn't make Hannibal who he was, they did play some role in luring the monster to the surface. Yet, for all of his death and destruction, Will was confident that Hannibal's love of Mischa had been true. He had consumed her in a way he had hoped to honor her, to keep some part of her within himself when there was no other option. Mischa forced Will to realize that Hannibal *was* , in fact, capable of love. *Perhaps Hannibal did hold some sort of affection for me after all.*

The second thing Will had learned on his interlude in Lithuania was that he was capable of killing and invoking violence in his ghostly form, which held serious repercussions for Hannibal. Will yearned to drive a knife into Hannibal's chest so that Hannibal could feel the cold steel of Will's wrath. He wanted to watch blood fall from Hannibal's neck like petals falling from a rose. He wanted Hannibal to be completely and utterly at his mercy.

Yet Will did not acknowledge the growing ache inside of him that suggested something quite different. He paid no mind to the voices calling out for Hannibal's tender embrace, spared no thought for the way Hannibal's lips might have felt on his. He especially did *not* feel the way he longed for Hannibal to cup his jaw and murmur sweet words into his ear.

Will spent the time upon his sailboat, heading for Italy, fixating on these beautiful and horrifically contradictory thoughts of affliction and affection.

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Hannibal dipped Bedelia lowly, his eyes boring into hers as he held her above the floor precariously. He did not allow her to drop, however, opting instead to bring her back to an upright position. She clung to his shoulder and adjusted her dress, purposefully trying to draw Hannibal's attention to her breasts. Naturally, he obliged with a lingering look before he snagged two glasses of champagne and handed one to her.

" *Bellissima* ," he said, clinking their glasses together.

" *Grazie* ," she replied, her voice dripping with honey.

"Dr. Fell, I hope you translate as well as you waltz."

Hannibal did his damndest to ensure his eyes did not roll into the back of his head. He turned to face the offending party, coming face to face with a scrawny Italian man, well-dressed but wearing his ego garishly.

"Our new appointee was confirmed by the board after close questioning," Signor Albizzi supplied, giving the man- a Professor Sogliato- a sharp look.

"You've examined him in medieval Italian, and I will not deny his language is admirable," Solgiato said with a simpering smile.

"Thank you," Hannibal said politely.

"For a *straniero* ," Sogliato added, smirking. Hannibal felt the wall of rage rise within him before he forced himself to remain calm, plastering on a fake smile.

"Dr. Fell might hold in his hand -- in his non-Italian hand -- a note from Dante Alighieri himself. Would he recognize it? I think not," Soligato continued, mocking. Bedelia cut in and whisked Sogliato off for a dance. Before they could get too far away, Hannibal allowed the ancient Italian to fall from his lips, basking in the way heads turned to listen in admiration:

"Allegro mi sembrava Amor tenendo / meo core in mano, e ne le braccia avea / madonna involta in un drappo dormendo. / Poi la svegliava, e d'esto core ardendo / lei paventosa umilmente pascea; / appreso gir lo ne vedea piangendo ."

Sogliato looked most displeased as the ballroom around them erupted into applause. Bedelia offered him a small smile. Hannibal fixed his eyes on Sogliato.

“Dante's first sonnet. It fascinated Cavalcanti. The eating of the heart is a powerful image,” Hannibal says, his thoughts traitorously straying from the pig in front of him to another whose heart he would love to devour, in more ways than one. He could almost imagine the sensation of holding Will’s beating heart in his hand, of swallowing it down while it still fluttered in his chest, before Sogliato rudely pulled him from his fantasy.

“If he's such an expert on Dante, let him lecture on Dante, to the Studiolo. Let him face them. *Extempore* ,” Sogliato says, thinking he’d won. Hannibal narrowed his eyes minutely.

“I’m happy to sing for my supper,” he said, ignoring Bedelia’s pointed look before she pulled Sogliato out to the dance floor, ostensibly to avoid further escalation between the two men. Hannibal sighed internally, swirling the champagne in his glass absentmindedly.

Dancing couples moved throughout the room, dresses flowing as their wearers twirled, expensive jewelry flashing in the light.

My dearest Will. I cannot seem to chase you from my mind. Even now, I see you standing across the ballroom from me as the crowd disappears. Come to me, Will. Come to me and allow me to hold you close to my chest as we dance through the night. A macabre dance, where we are streaked with blood and our feet trample the skulls of the unworthy. Come back to me, Will. I forgave you, once. Would you forgive me, even now? I know not how to survive this separation.

Hannibal knew it had been seven months since he’d last seen Will, quickly approaching eight within the next week. He’d hardly killed anyone during that time, trying not to draw attention to himself, knowing it would only lead Will to exactly where he was. Yet Hannibal wasn’t so sure he’d last much longer without drawing the man to him once again. His fingers itched to *stab* , to *choke* , to *rip to shreds* . A less familiar ache, one which he’d only been plagued with following his separation from Will for these past several months, twinged in his heart.

Will Graham, you have taken over my heart. You have taken it, and you have broken it.

Hannibal shook his head, shoving the horrid *human* thoughts deep down into his chest, content to ignore them. At least for now.

What Hannibal didn’t know is that he wouldn’t even make it a week before the traitorous thoughts reared their head again and changed Hannibal’s life, for better or for worse.

Chapter End Notes

IT'S ALMOST HERE PEOPLE!!! NEXT CHAPTER WILL GETS TO HANNIBAL FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE HIS DEATH!

But will Hannibal be able to see him?? Hmmm....

as always thank you SO MUCH for reading, commenting, leaving kudos, etc.! much love my lovely fannibals <3

*also quick note: Mischa's story/dialogue here is inspired by 'Hannibal Rising' by Thomas Harris as well as Fuller's more ambiguous description of Mischa. I wanted to keep the backstory more ambiguous in line with the TV series, but the way I wrote her as a character borrows from Harris' description.

Corpses and Catacombs

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will slipped silently by the tourists cramming through the gates that led into the cathedral. As he rounded the corner and caught his first glimpse of the Norman Chapel's sanctuary in all of its haunting glory, his heart expanded with warmth, as if Hannibal were caressing the core of his soul. He could *feel* Hannibal even more here than he had felt at his childhood home in Lithuania. As his eyes raked over the votive candles, the flames flickering through the red glass, he couldn't help but be reminded of the dazzling fireflies that inhabited Hannibal's cochlear garden, and the way that Mischa had danced among the lights as she passed on. A bittersweet ache settled once again in his heart.

Passing through unnoticed by the tourists, Will came to a halt as he approached the altar, glancing down to finally see the skull mosaic on the floor in person. He bent down and ran his fingers over it reverently, imagining Hannibal must have done so himself decades ago when constructing the foyer of his mind palace.

He circled the chapel, frowning up at Jesus Christ Pantocrator, wondering if perhaps that's who Mischa and Abigail and Beverly now walked beside. Regardless, Will was quite sure the same fate did not await him, even if he ever managed to 'go on,' though Will highly doubted that would ever happen anyway. Not when Hannibal's blood seemed to call out for him, as if calling him home. *Are you here now, Hannibal?*

Will spent a few days in Palermo, scouring the chapel and then every corner of the city, before he finally admitted that Hannibal was nowhere to be found. Hannibal wasn't in Palermo.

Will was sitting in a palazzo near the Chapel, watching the sun filter through his leg and amusing himself by noticing he didn't have a shadow, when the thought dawned on him. *Perhaps Hannibal's in Florence* . Will thought back on the sketches of Florence that had littered the floor in Countess Lecter's room and admitted the possibility necessitated some consideration.

Florence was practically the birthplace of the renaissance and Hannibal, being the ultimate renaissance man himself, would naturally be drawn to the ancient city with its Duomo and the magnificence of the art that hung within the creatively constructed buildings. Will drew himself to his feet and nodded to himself, knowing instinctively if Hannibal was not currently in Palermo, he was surely in Florence.

A relatively short train ride later and Will was strolling through the streets of Florence, for once allowing himself to complain internally about something as mundane as not being able

to partake in feasting upon the gelato that called to him from the shoppes along the road. Will sighed as he came to a stop in one of the city's squares, unsure of where to look for Hannibal next. But then his eyes landed on a banner hanging from the side of a nearby building advertising a new exhibit on display nearby.

It had been the rusted torture instruments depicted on the banner that drew his attention, and as soon as he read the name of the exhibit- the Exhibiton on Atrocious Torture Instruments- Will *knew* that Hannibal would be there, likely working in some academic capacity. He scoffed as he realized it was exactly the type of place Hannibal would find interesting, not because of the torture instruments themselves, but because of the crowd that such an exhibition would attract. People like Will.

Ten minutes later and Will stood outside the *palazzo capponi* , marveling at the palace's walls. He walked through the entrance and passed through a small private garden in the center of the building before ascending the steps of the marble staircase that fell from the floors above to the ground in a swirl. He followed the sounds of murmuring voices, avoiding the displays with a lot of tourists, before he saw a curator carrying an ancient pear of anguish slip into a room that seemed to be closed off from the public. Will followed the curator and slipped through the door after them, and then came to a sudden halt.

Across the room, bent over a table examining a rusted head cage, was Hannibal. Will's stomach dropped and his heart seemed to turn over in his chest, trying to fight back against the intense wave of varying emotions that crowded his consciousness. He took a tentative step forward, and then another, before he came to a standstill a few feet in front of Hannibal.

Hannibal bore a look of intense concentration as his gloved hands examined the artifact in front of him. Will could practically hear the gears turning in Hannibal's head as he turned the device over in his hand, inspecting it closely. His silvery dirty blond hair fell across his forehead and Will's hand flinched as he repressed a sudden urge to reach out and run his fingers through the stray locks.

"Hannibal," Will croaked out, his voice suddenly hoarse. He ground his teeth in frustration when Hannibal gave no response.

"Hannibal," he said again, his voice cracking with desperation. Will's eyes burned and he blinked against the sting furiously. Hannibal once again gave no indication he heard or felt Will's presence.

Up until this point, Will hadn't felt his death as sharply as he did now, standing across from Hannibal. He felt his chest turn to ice as grief settled deep into his bones. Anger and pain flared along with the sadness, ultimately leaving Will staring at Hannibal forlornly, his hands hanging uselessly at his sides despite the constant urge to reach across the table towards the man who had stolen Will's last breath.

Hannibal stood back up and took his gloves off, throwing them in the wastepaper basket next to him. He jotted down a couple of notes on a notepad off to the side before he shuffled his papers back into his leather briefcase, bid his colleagues a good evening, and then made his way towards the door, Will following quickly behind him.

Hannibal trotted down the steps, and as Will walked beside him, he felt a twinge of anger as he noticed how utterly content and peaceful Hannibal appeared to be. *How dare you, you fucker. I'm dead and your pompous ass is over here living in serenity? That illusion is about to come crashing down around you, Hannibal.*

"Hello! Bonjour!" a man's voice called out across the garden square as Hannibal walked out of the building. Will's eyes shot up to locate the call and his gaze landed on a man, dressed nicely in a dark plum suit, with his eyes fixed on Hannibal. Yet Hannibal did not register that the man was calling out to him specifically and was surprised when the man reached out and grabbed Hannibal's arm, halting him in his tracks. Will's eyes narrowed in suspicion.

"We met in Paris a few months back. Sorry, didn't mean to startle you, but here I was and then, there you were... I never forget a face…" the man said, his dark blue eyes shining as he stared intently at Hannibal. Hannibal returned a polite smile.

"Anthony Dimmond."

"Nice to be remembered," Anthony said with a sly smile.

"You're hard to forget," Hannibal shot back at Anthony.

What the hell? Is Hannibal flirting…?

"What are you doing in Florence? Are you working with Roman?"

"Dr. Fell?"

"I heard he took an appointment at the Capponi library," Anthony said, his eyes flickering over Hannibal's face in curiosity. Will's frown deepened.

"Yes, he's the new curator and translator of the Palazzo Capponi."

"Evidently, the last one eloped with a woman or someone's money or both."

"That's the commonly-held belief. You just missed Roman," Hannibal said. Anthony looked disappointed but Hannibal quickly aimed to correct it.

"But if you're free, my wife and I would love to have you for dinner," Hannibal said, flashing a small smile at the man. Will's head whipped to look at Hannibal again, his gaze calculating.

Wife!?

Will was sure his eyes were going to roll into the back of his head when he saw that Hannibal's 'wife' was just Bedelia. *Bitch* .

He huffed in annoyance as he sat at Hannibal's dinner table, idly listening to Hannibal make horrid cannibal puns, Bedelia whining from the top of her high horse, and Anthony swooning

over both of them like a woman from the 18th century. Yet Will resisted the temptation to wreak havoc by employing his *ghostly* skills, opting instead to merely observe. Hannibal was ever the charmer, sending sultry glances to his dinner guest from across the table. Will told himself that the feeling in his chest wasn't jealousy.

"Roman is speaking to the Studiolo tomorrow. On Dante. You should come," Hannibal said, quirking his eyebrow at Anthony. Anthony beamed.

"Sounds appropriately hellish," he smirked in response.

They finished their dinner quietly, though not without Anthony's flirtatious glances at Hannibal and Hannibal's hints at Bedelia that he was slowly improving her flavor for later… consumption. Bedelia seemed put out after she discovered exactly what he meant, opting to forgo the last of her oysters while Hannibal watched all of the events unfolding with mild amusement.

After dinner, Bedelia slinked away from the two men and Hannibal walked Anthony to the door, where Anthony placed a hand on Hannibal's forearm.

"Thank you for dinner, it was quite lovely. I look forward to seeing both you and Dr. Fell tomorrow," Anthony said, pure seduction falling from his lips. Hannibal seemed momentarily enthralled but recovered quickly, placing his hand at the small of Anthony's back as he steered him from the room.

" *Buonanotte* , Anthony," Hannibal said, inhaling the man discreetly. Will froze at the familiar motion, suddenly realizing why Anthony had appeared so… familiar… in a way. Anthony bore striking resemblances to Will himself, his dark brown hair falling in curls around his face and his intellect wrapping itself around Hannibal temptingly. A flash of jealousy soon gave way to curiosity. *Does Hannibal miss me? Is Mr. Dimmond a poor attempt at connection?*

Hannibal closed the door softly behind him and made his way back to the kitchen, where he spent the better part of the next hour cleaning. When the sun had set and night had settled in, Will watched Hannibal slide into bed next to an already asleep Bedelia (there was a mostly empty bottle of wine on the table next to her) where he then spent hours staring at the ceiling in contemplation. Will stood in the corner and watched, desperately wishing he could see what Hannibal was thinking. When Hannibal glanced out the window to look at the stars, Will followed his gaze.

When you look at the stars, do you think of me, Hannibal? Do you know that, even now, our stars are the same? Surely our stars have always been the same.

Will caught on to Hannibal's game quite quickly when he followed Hannibal into the studiolo the next day and watched him take the stage under the name of Dr. Fell. So when Anthony entered the room and stood lurking in the corner, Will tilted his head in curiosity as he debated Hannibal's next moves. He supposed it really depended on how Mr. Dimmond chose to handle the implication that Hannibal had killed Dr. Fell, his former mentor. Either way,

Will bet the man would be dead in less than 24 hours and he would be lying to himself if he said he wasn't quite content to see him go.

Hannibal lectured about Dante passionately for the next hour and Will couldn't suppress the small indulgent smile that spread across his face as he watched Hannibal come into his element. He wasn't surprised when, at the end of his lecture, Hannibal received a standing ovation. And he wasn't surprised to see Anthony's gaze grow more heated as he slowly approached Hannibal as the guests began to file out.

When it was just the two men (and an unseen Will) left, Anthony slithered his way up to Hannibal and spoke in sultry tones.

"An exposition of Atrocious Torture Instruments appeals to connoisseurs of the very worst in mankind," he said.

"Now that ceaseless exposure has calloused us to the lewd and the vulgar, it is instructive to see what still seems wicked to us," Hannibal responded.

"What still slaps the clammy flab of our submissive consciousness hard enough to get our attention?"

"What wickedness has your attention, Mr. Dimmond?" Hannibal asked, his gaze cool and calculating as he circled Anthony, passing off the motion as gathering his materials from his desk.

"Yours, "Dr. Fell." I have no delusions of morality; if I had, I would've gone to *la polizia* . I'm curious what fate befell Dr. Fell to see you here in his stead," Anthony said, his eyes flashing with both curiosity and overconfidence.

"You may have to strap me to the breaking wheel to loosen my tongue," Hannibal replied smoothly.

God, I would kill to do that to you right about now.

"We can twist ourselves into all manner of uncomfortable positions just to maintain appearances, with or without a breaking wheel," Anthony said.

"Are you here to twist me into an uncomfortable position?" Hannibal asked.

"I'm here to help you untwist... to our mutual benefit," Anthony replied slyly. Hannibal's eyes darkened and Will could swear he heard Hannibal's breath falter, if only minutely.

"Follow me then, Mr. Dimmond," Hannibal said, leading the younger man out of the Studiolo and back towards his apartment.

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Hannibal was pleased to note Bedelia's absence from the apartment as he ushered Anthony inside after him. The younger man, with his hauntingly familiar blue eyes, dark brown curls, and an almost irresistible penchant for darkness, eagerly scanned Hannibal's bedroom when Hannibal directed him to the opulent room with the large king bed looming suggestively in front of them.

Anthony turned to face Hannibal once again and flashed him a half-smile, which Hannibal's brain immediately associated with Will's snarkiness and confidence he had seen as they dined on Randall Tier together. The memory sparked a hunger within Hannibal and he found himself unable to resist the man standing a few feet in front of him. Anthony's slight but muscular frame seemed to flicker and dull around the edges as Hannibal kept getting flashes of Will standing across from him instead.

Anthony stepped forward to boldly claim Hannibal's lips in a searing kiss, opening his mouth wantonly to invite Hannibal in. Hannibal immediately accepted the invitation, closing the distance between them and thrusting his tongue ruthlessly into Anthony's mouth. Their teeth clacked together as Hannibal felt his control slip, hunger filling his chest as he bit down sharply on Anthony's lower lip, enough to draw blood. Anthony reared back and looked at him from under hooded lids.

" *Shit* ," he breathed. "You're quite the controlling fucker, aren't you?"

"If you are even managing the words to ask such an ignorant question of me, I clearly am not doing my job well enough," growled Hannibal, tightening his hand around Anthony's neck and pulling him closer to trap him in another kiss. Anthony let out a shaky breath, his lips trembling against Hannibal's. Hannibal couldn't help but think Will would react to his advances in a similarly responsive way. Hannibal sank his fingers into Anthony's dark hair, feeling only Will's curls cling to his fingers.

"What do you want?" whispered Anthony as Hannibal planted sharp kisses along his neck.

"For you to cease your prattling. Get on your knees," Hannibal said roughly, pushing Anthony down to his knees on the floor. Anthony didn't seem to mind Hannibal's domineering attitude, not that Hannibal really cared anyway. Anthony grinned up at him mischievously from his place on the floor as he ran his hands along Hannibal's obviously hard cock through his trousers. He bent forward and began to mouth at the growing bulge, causing Hannibal to groan softly at the sensation. His hands flew to his belt and let it fall to the floor, the clack of metal against the ground arousing on its own. Anthony unzipped him and pulled out his cock before greedily swallowing down roughly half of Hannibal's length, causing Hannibal's breath to hitch in pleasure.

Anthony hummed around Hannibal's cock, sending waves of pleasure through the engorged member. Hannibal tugged Anthony's curls but his breath faltered when he looked down at Anthony, seeing Will instead. Will was taking Hannibal's cock deep into his throat, wide eyes fixed on Hannibal, just as he had looked when they had sensually dined on the forbidden ortolans together back in Baltimore. The image was so fresh in his memory palace that he couldn't stand the pleasure he felt at being swallowed by Will in this incredibly intimate way.

“ *Will,* ” Hannibal moaned, his eyes fluttering shut as he allowed himself to be swept up in sensation. A sudden *pop* and Hannibal internally bemoaned the loss of a warm mouth and he looked down to find someone- *not Will?*- looking up at him with narrowed eyes.

“My name is not Will,” the man- *right, Anthony*- said. But Hannibal shook his head sharply.

“Tonight you are,” Hannibal said gruffly, yanking the kneeling man to his feet. He fixed Anthony with a hard stare, waiting for acquiescence. He slowly nodded and it was all the consent Hannibal needed, for he then divested Anthony and himself of all their clothes and spun Anthony around, pushing him face first onto the bed.

Will-Who-Was-Not-Will moaned as Hannibal climbed onto the bed behind him, settling on his knees after he retrieved a glass vial of lube from the nightstand. Hannibal poured the liquid liberally onto his fingers before he circled Anthony’s rim a couple of times before pushing his index finger into Anthony’s hole. Anthony let out a low moan and Hannibal grit his teeth, suddenly very impatient as he looked down at the man below him and saw only taut back muscles and a head full of brown curly hair.

One digit quickly became two and then Hannibal situated himself behind Anthony, rubbing his cock against Anthony’s hole. Anthony bent lower and lifted his ass higher in the air and Hannibal slapped the offered flesh harshly before he gripped Anthony’s hips and sunk into his heat, moaning lowly at the overwhelmingly pleasant sensation.

Hannibal then started to rock slowly, his hips snapping as he buried himself to the hilt inside of Anthony. Anthony let out a strained moan and Hannibal’s eyes snapped open to look down at the man below him. Before his very eyes, the light grey streaks in Anthony’s hair darkened slightly and the strands curled up even more. The arms became more toned, the back muscles sharpened slightly, and the ass he ground into, more round. The man below him was Will again.

“Call me Hannibal,” Hannibal growled softly as he thrust back into that heat, relishing the way Will arched his back to take Hannibal in deeper. Hannibal dove back in and found Will’s prostate, dragging his length slowly over the bundle of nerves, slowly increasing Will’s pleasure. Will was practically whimpering before Hannibal decided he’d suffered enough and he picked up the pace again, thrusting deeply, his hips smacking against the flesh of Will’s ass in an obscenely loud manner.

“ *Hannibal!”* Will moaned, his hands twisting in the sheets as Hannibal pounded into him. The sound of Hannibal’s name on Will’s lips went straight to Hannibal’s cock and he began to thrust faster, his hand sneaking up to Will’s neck to clasp it possessively.

“ *Will, mylimasis,* ” Hannibal groaned before he felt the pressure begin to build low in his stomach. He shoved Will’s chest to the bed and held his hips in place as he buried his cock deep in Will’s ass as he came with a muffled groan. Will lowered his hand to his own cock and fisted it a couple times before he came with a shout, spurting hot white ropes across the bedspread. Will’s hole clenched around Hannibal’s cock as if trying to hold him inside but Hannibal withdrew his softening cock, leaning back to admire the way his seed dripped slowly from Will’s hole.

Hannibal lowered himself gently to the bed, lying on his back as he recovered. He reached out a lazy hand and traced it over Will's back, smiling softly as he ran a finger through the curls' on Will's head. And then Will turned to look at him.

Hannibal's blood turned to ice as he realized the man in bed next to him was *not* Will Graham. Realization crashed down on him like a boulder as he remembered the way Anthony's features had slowly shifted into Will's, and Hannibal knew he'd been powerless, completely and utterly beholden to his own fantasy of making love to Will. Hannibal swallowed thickly.

Anthony peered up at him, smirking devilishly. He opened his mouth to say something but Hannibal only saw *Not Will* and he couldn't stomach the thought; he saw red and his hand flashed out to grab the miniature Aristotle bust on the nightstand and he brought it crashing down on Anthony's head, his head splitting open, his blood painting the walls with a macabre maroon. Hannibal blinked a few times and then dropped the bust dispassionately, leaning back to close his eyes and ruminate on a proper tableau for his newest victim.

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Will couldn't move. He was frozen in shock, his face twisted between an expression of surprise and one of despair; he certainly hadn't seen this coming. The force of a thousand memories replaying in his mind caused him to scrunch his eyes closed, trying to sort through the flashing images in pursuit of clarity. *Oh, god. How could I have been so fucking blind?*

Suddenly, all of the 'casual' brushes of Hannibal's hand to his skin made so much more sense. The heat in his gaze and the intensity of his affections were perfectly understandable in light of this realization. But most of all, Hannibal's heartbreak made that much more sense to Will.

His chest clenched and he allowed himself to fall to the floor, pulling his knees to his chest as he stifled a cry. *Hannibal wanted me to run away with him. He gave me a child, a chance for a family that understood me. He made a home for us. He gave me chance after chance, and I still betrayed him. All he wanted was a partner, someone who could see him.*

Will hung his head, appalled when he found himself staring down at his own tented trousers, his cock straining against the fabric. Other than the faint surprise he was still able to be aroused, he felt guilty more than anything. *Fuck* . Will put up a valiant fight but once he acknowledged the existence of his repressed feelings, they became that much more clear, as if burning themselves in harsh script on the back of his eyelids. *Deep down, I knew the extent of Hannibal's affections. I was so willingly blind to the depth of his attraction to me because I confused my empathy for his feelings with my own feelings, opting to bury my own affections for him rather than admit to them. In burying my own feelings, I buried his too, not even knowing they had merged with my own. My own cowardice- my refusal to acknowledge my authentic and most intimate desires- cost me Hannibal's trust. Perhaps I fucking deserved to die.*

“ *Fuck* ,” he swore again, his voice breaking as he pulled his knees to his chest, glancing over the tops of his knees at Hannibal lying on the bed, his eyes closed and deep in thought, hands still bloody. He longed to reach out and stroke those soft eyelids, perhaps press his lips to feel Hannibal’s own. But there could be none of that. Not now. Not ever.

Will stood up and walked over to the bed slowly, sitting on the edge so that he could gaze down at Hannibal. Hannibal didn’t move and Will reached out tentatively, laying his hand over Hannibal’s arm. Unsurprisingly, he couldn’t feel anything, but he did notice with some relief that the area where his hand hovered over Hannibal’s skin had broken out in goosebumps, his hairs standing on end. Hannibal’s arm twitched minutely, his body unconsciously registering the chill of Will’s presence. Will ran a finger along the long scar on Hannibal’s wrist, desperately wishing he could feel the raised skin from where he had marked Hannibal, even though it had been through proxy.

Hannibal did twitch then, opening his eyes and drawing himself up to lean against the headboard of the bed, idly rubbing his fingers over the scar that Will had just touched. He seemed to not even be aware he was doing it, and Will wondered at that moment if Hannibal had made a habit of affectionately touching his scars. However, Hannibal did eventually realize what he’d been doing and he stared down at his own arm with a frown. A couple of silent moments passed and then Hannibal was standing, packing a couple of bags, one with clothes and one with a various assortment of interesting tools. And then Hannibal scrupulously cleaned his own crime scene before turning his attention back to the former Mr. Dimmond.

Hannibal, it turns out, had a very specific design in mind for his next tableau. Will followed him curiously, which included sitting across from Hannibal in an otherwise empty train car, unseen and unheard. He watched as Hannibal took a sketch of Da Vinci’s ‘ideal man’ and folded it into an origami heart. Will saw the way Hannibal struggled to accept his own feelings, catching flashes of anger, grief, and fondness in his microexpressions as he fondled the paper heart in his hand.

The train came to a stop in Palermo. Hannibal checked into a modest yet still refined lone house that was situated quite closely to the Norman Chapel. When night fell and the moon was high in the sky, Will followed Hannibal as he picked the locks to the ancient cathedral and hauled Anthony’s body and his large bag of tools into the sanctuary. He sat in one of the pews and watched as Hannibal worked earnestly for a couple of hours divesting Anthony of his head, hands, and feet before skinning him so that only his muscles were exposed, and then twisted him into a shape that greatly exceeded an ‘uncomfortable position.’

Hannibal then stabbed three swords through the bottom of the knotted flesh, his face contorting with glimpses of emotional anguish as he pushed each sword in. He then erected the sculpture, centering it above the skull mosaic in the center of the chapel. Hannibal made a few last minute tweaks before he stepped back to examine the overall effect of the tableau. Pleased with his efforts, he cleaned the scene and retreated back to the house for the night.

Will did not follow him this time, opting instead to circle the tableau alone, allowing himself to be submerged in the emotional imprint of the scene as his empathy took over. He reached

out a hand and gingerly tried to touch the proffered flesh. As his fingers hovered above the surface, he felt Hannibal's pain and heartbreak. His fingers flinched as they encountered the sharp edges of Hannibal's resentment, and then they reached out further when they felt the warmth of Hannibal's affection buried into flesh and bone.

Will inhaled shakily, taking a few steps back to see the overall piece again. He could see that the tableau alluded to the 'reversed three of swords' tarot card, symbolizing heartbreak and grief on a general level, but with underlying notes of forgiveness and the hope of reconciliation. *He's left me his broken heart. A valentine, written on a broken man*. *He misses me...He made this tableau because he knew I'd come once I'd seen it, seeing it as the sign of hope for reconciliation that it is.* Then, *He really doesn't know I'm dead… He thinks I'm alive. I wasn't supposed to die*.

Will felt an inexplicable wave of relief wash over him, for although it didn't change the fact that he was dead, he found comfort in the fact that Hannibal hadn't intended for him to die, that he had meant his gutting only as a punishment and not as a permanent end of existence. Yet the realization also brought further pain, knowing that Hannibal would have to find out sooner or later, and that they would both suffer further from their separation. Will sat down on the altar steps and watched over his gift through the night, feeling irrationally protective of it when the police came in the morning to examine it and then dismantle it. It had been so *beautiful* and Will's heart ached with all of the intentions and implications behind the valentine.

Hannibal stayed in Palermo for the next week, returning to the chapel everyday to wait in the shadows, clearly waiting for Will. In the evenings, Hannibal walked the city, never seeming to sleep that much. He ate alone and spent most of the night reading. Bedelia had remained in Florence and Hannibal seemed indifferent to her absence, seeming to have concentrated only on Will. He checked TattleCrime multiple times a day for any news of Will, to no end. *Freddie's stuck to her word, then* .

After a week had passed, Hannibal walked back to the Norman chapel after dinner for the second time that day, something he had not done any other day. The chapel was primarily empty save the priest who was preparing to leave. He gave Hannibal a cursory nod as he passed but then he locked eyes with Will before nodding to him as well. Will froze, turning around to glance after the man but found that he was gone, leaving only Hannibal and Will in the sanctuary. Will smiled to himself- he'd finally been seen by a living person! Knowing that it was at least possible gave Will hope that someday he'd be able to be seen by Hannibal. Hannibal would just have to be more open to the possibility that perhaps there was more out there, more than what could be seen by a mind trapped in logic and rationality.

Hannibal approached the votive candles and amused himself by extinguishing several of the candles people had lit in prayer. But then his smirk seemed to flicker and Will watched as Hannibal lit a candle himself, watching the flames contemplatively. Hannibal then paced around the sanctuary once more before going dipping down a staircase he hadn't used before- one that led to the catacombs.

Will wondered what was different about this night for Hannibal. It'd been a week or so since he'd left the tableau and had been waiting earnestly for Will every moment of the day since then. Hannibal was aching from their separation just as much as Will was.

Will followed Hannibal down into the catacombs. Lanterns with low flickering flames lit the way, making long shadows fall across Hannibal's face. He paced through the twists and turns of the musky earth for what seemed like at least an hour. As Hannibal paced by another torch, Will saw that his face was uncharacteristically vulnerable, reminiscent of how heartbroken he'd looked the night Will died.

With a pang in his heart that caused his whole chest to seize, Will started to pace himself, his emotion rising to an unchecked level. He could practically feel it bleed out of him and fall to the floor, seeping into the graves of others just like him. He looked up as moonlight filtered through the domes that lay spaced out around the catacombs and his chest filled with hope and yearning. He *needed* Hannibal, now more than ever before.

"Hannibal," he called into the still air, freezing with cautious joy when he *swore* he heard an echo reverberate around the walls. Hannibal, in the shadows at the edge of Will's vision, froze as well, his head turned back in a posture that showed he had heard, too.

"I forgive you," Will said softly. And he meant it; in that moment he truly forgave Hannibal for Abigail, for hurting him, for taking his life.

Hannibal turned quickly, scanning the entire space before him, his eyes passing over Will, still unseeing. Will's hope deflated, then, the forgiveness already losing its validity as his anger returned with a newfound vivacity, his invisibility harshly reminding him that Will's condition *was* permanent. And here Hannibal was upset because they were separated, when he didn't even *know* that Will was dead, his flesh already having turned to dust. Will fought a snarl as his soul battled between the redeeming virtues of forgiveness and a more primal lust for revenge.

Yet Will did nothing except endure the pit that formed in his stomach as Hannibal walked right past him without a second glance as he left the catacombs, a serene expression of his face. *God, it fucking hurts* . As Will turned on his heel and stomped off after Hannibal, the torches in the catacombs extinguished, plunging the space into a chilling darkness that matched what Will felt in his soul. Whispers of smoke blew throughout the room before they too were lost to the world.

Chapter End Notes

as always, thank you for reading, my fellow fannibals!!

stay tuned for next week's reunion scene!

When Wax Wings Melt

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Icarus is flying too close to the sun

And Icarus' life, it has only just begun

This is how it feels to take a fall

Icarus is flying towards an early grave

- *Icarus, song by Bastille*

“How was Palermo?” Bedelia asked, nursing red wine in a glass the size of a fishbowl. Hannibal settled into a chair across from her and crossed his legs, glancing at her contemplatively.

“I ran into Will Graham,” he said.

“You're ruminating the way most of us look for a lost object: we review its image in our minds and compare that image to what we see,” Bedelia said languidly, studying his face for a response. Hannibal frowned.

“Or don’t see,” he said, thinking back to how he hadn’t been able to catch an actual glimpse of Will the entire time in Palermo; he’d only heard his words call out to him from the shadows as they had walked like Death among the graves beneath the cathedral.

“Was it nice to see him?”

“It was nice,” Hannibal conceded. “Among other things. He knew where to look for me,” Hannibal said with a small smile.

“You knew where he would look,” Bedelia said, never one to let Hannibal forget the reality of things.

“He said he forgave me,” Hannibal said, not daring to look Bedelia in the eye. Instead, he stared into the teacup in his hand, watching the dark liquid twirl as he moved the teacup in minute circles.

“Forgiveness is too great and difficult for one person. It requires two: betrayer and betrayed. Which one are you?”

Betrayed. Betrayer. Both.

“I’m vague on those details,” Hannibal admitted, ignoring the foreign sense of emotional confusion in his chest.

“Betrayal and forgiveness are best seen as something more akin to falling in love,” Bedelia said, drawing out the words and looking at Hannibal pointedly. Hannibal took a deep breath, steeling himself for what he was about to imply out loud. He’d recognized the blasted sentiment within himself, surely, but to give life to such thoughts by speaking them out loud would elevate them to a level of reality that Hannibal was unfamiliar with.

Instead of directly commenting on what Bedelia was implying, he said, “You cannot control with respect to whom you fall in love.”

His heartbeat increased of its own volition, his very own organs beating out a rhythm of betrayal. *I love him* . The words settled upon his heart and electrified his very core; he was not sure he would live to tell the tale his heart was writing.

“You're going to get caught. It's already been set into motion,” Bedelia said, her voice flat and without concern. Hannibal tilted his chin at her, studying her. He found he didn’t really care if he got caught, not really. Not if he got to see his Will again.

“Is that concern for your patient or concern for yourself?” Hannibal asked shrewdly. Bedelia gave him a cold smile.

“I'm not concerned about me. I know exactly how I will be navigating my way out of whatever it is I’ve gotten myself into. Do you?”

By whatever means necessary.

“You loved your sister, Mischa.”

Hannibal froze, the name sending a shiver down his spine.

“Yes,” he said, his tone clipped.

“What your sister made you feel was beyond your conscious ability to control or predict,” Bedelia said. “I would suggest what Will Graham makes you feel is not dissimilar. A force of mind and circumstance.”

“Love.”

“Love is a god.”

“He pays you a visit or he doesn’t,” Hannibal said.

Love has paid me a visit; he has settled into the very hearth of my abode and has become one with the bones of my foundation. I cannot control or predict it, just as I have never been able to entirely predict my dearest Will.

"If past behavior is an indicator of future behavior, there is only one way for you to forgive Will Graham. Only one way for you to forgive him the influence he has had over your heart, your mind," Bedelia said slowly, her eyes burning with curiosity.

I would consume you, Will. I know not how else to forgive you for what you have done to me, for the power you now hold over me. Should you refuse your rightful place by my side- my partner in all things- consuming you would be the only recourse remaining with which I could properly honor you .

"I have to eat him."

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Will swallowed thickly as he heard the words leave Hannibal's mouth. His immediate reaction was one of horror and confusion, for how could Hannibal say he loved Will in one moment only to say he longed to consume him in the next?

But on an instinctual level, Will knew better. Will knew that Hannibal was becoming desperate and Hannibal, being unfamiliar with desperation, would let it destroy him, pushing him towards his most primal instincts. And for Hannibal, his most primal instinct was to consume. *Perhaps he thinks consuming me is the only possible way he could carry me with him forever; he cannot bear to have me live apart from him, so he would rather have me dead and with him than alive and separated.* Little did Hannibal know, he already had Will dead and with him. Regardless, it was a sentiment Will resented but could understand; he had thought the same about Hannibal on the numerous occasions he had debated taking his life.

But all of that hardly mattered now. Hannibal would eventually come to understand that he could not become one with Will physically, whether it be through the joining of their wills or through consumption. A wave of anger over the loss of an opportunity so precious as uniting with Hannibal rolled over Will and he felt it bubble up in his chest before he felt it spill out of him, tendrils of hot resentment shooting across the room. The teacup in Hannibal's hand shattered, shards of china embedding themselves in Hannibal's hand and some falling to the ground. Hannibal froze, confused as he looked down at the teacup on the ground.

"And the teacup shatters once again," he murmured. The familiar phrase stirred something in Will's heart and *oh god it hurt* and then Will was rubbing his face anxiously, power swirling around unsteadily. *Get a grip.* Will tried to rein in his emotion but it was fruitless. The anger and grief continued to escalate and then Bedelia's wine glass shattered, dark red wine staining her clothes. Will wished it was her blood.

He balled his hands into fists and tried to make his feelings *just fucking stop* but then the large glass window was shattering, glass falling to the floor in a million pieces. Books flew off the shelves and cascaded down the room, papers falling in slow motion. The lights flickered before the lightbulbs too shattered in a sudden surge of energy before Will felt himself collapse to the ground, drawing in panicked breaths.

Hannibal wore an expression of mild surprise, the shock so subtle it irritated Will. Bedelia was much more unnerved, glancing around the room in a mixture of fear and anger.

“What gods have you pissed off, Hannibal?” she growled, withdrawing to a corner of the room.

“There is no god, trinitarian or otherwise,” Hannibal stated calmly, looking about the room with interest. Will glared up at him from his place on the floor, too drained to stand. Will could feel his residual power suspended in the room and he tried to pull it back into himself, but it was harder than he expected.

“Perhaps a vengeful spirit, then. I’m sure you have ghosts enough to haunt an entire cemetery,” Bedelia snapped.

“Perhaps,” Hannibal said, still sitting in his chair, his hands now steepled under his chin as he thought. Bedelia stomped across the apartment and slammed the door to the bedroom, enclosing herself inside and locking the door. Will rolled his eyes. Hannibal remained in his spot, staring down at the teacup. Will couldn’t help the brief surge of affection at seeing Hannibal’s fascination with the object and he raised his hand, motioning for the shards of the teacup to hover in the air, spinning in a circle slowly. Hannibal gazed upon the sight with boylike wonder, a pure expression of curiosity so unguarded that he surely would never have let it slip had anyone been around.

Will smiled fondly, finding the glow in Hannibal’s eyes to be reminiscent of Mischa’s. Will sat on the floor and levitated the teacup for hours. Hannibal did not move once, opting instead to sit quietly and stare upon the teacup for hours on end, as if he were waiting for the teacup to gather itself back together. It did not.

The next day, Hannibal went to work as usual, behaving as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. He clearly expected Will to come and find him in Florence, apparently content with letting Will decide when that time would be. Hannibal hadn’t lingered in Palermo, after all; he’d left the very next morning after hearing Will in the catacombs and had returned to Florence. Though in reality, Will had returned with him, sitting next to him for the duration of the train ride, unseen. Will assumed Hannibal had left in such haste because he had honestly needed time to process the fact that Will had indeed crossed the ocean to find him. To Hannibal’s mind, his valentine had worked.

Yet Hannibal was currently burying himself in work once again, content to let the chips fall where they may. As Will watched Hannibal throughout the day, his anger steadily grew. Hannibal’s feigned indifference to where Will was now was more infuriating by the moment.

Will tried to tell himself he wasn't hurt by how quickly Hannibal had left Palermo after their brief interaction but even he had trouble believing it.

And so Will sulked. As the bell rang six in the evening, curator after curator slowly began to file from the *palazzo capponi* , yet Hannibal remained. Will squinted over Hannibal's shoulder to see him concentrating on writing an article about some horrid torture instrument, his annoyingly perfect penmanship flying across the page. When the last curator left the room, and the sun began to set, Hannibal finally stood, walking over to one of the large windows and opening it to stand on the ledge and watch the sunset.

Will looked out and observed the pink-and-orange sky, longing to feel the warm Italian breeze against his skin. Hannibal's hair seemed to glow gold in some places as the setting sun hit it, his brown eyes appreciating the beauty in front of him while simultaneously seeming to be fixated on something more sinister. As Will peered closer, he could see the frown lines in Hannibal's face, could see the unspoken anguish deep in his eyes. His shoulders slumped with the weight of being separated from a loved one and Will's breath caught as the thought grew louder in his mind. Hannibal was here feeling sorry for himself when Will was standing *right next to him* , dead, the veil of the living separating them.

Just as the anger had welled in him the night before, it rose again within Will. But instead of letting it run rampant to smash teacups and wine glasses, Will chose to harness it this time. Will bit his lip in concentration as he reigned the swelling power in closer to him, the pressure rising in his chest. And then his eyes locked on Hannibal's face and- *god, I want him to pay* - Hannibal was lifted a few feet in the air before he was thrown through a glass case behind him, the glass shattering all around him and digging into his face, causing thick, red rivers to form on his face.

Will snarled in satisfaction as Hannibal grunted in pain, glass falling from his sleeves as he pulled himself out of the glass cage and to his feet once again. And yet there still wasn't enough blood; the monster raging in Will's chest cried out for more. And so Will raised his hand in a gesture that mimicked a punch to the face and his energy responded accordingly- a burst of raw energy slammed against the side of Hannibal's face like a brick wall and sent him reeling backwards. Hannibal crashed into the breaking wheel and Will twisted his hand, causing the wheel to turn so that one of Hannibal's arms was caught in it and held at a precarious angle; a few more degrees of rotation would cause Hannibal's shoulder to snap in half.

Will held the wheel in its position, hand outstretched and shaking, as he looked upon Hannibal's face. *God, I want to hear his bones snap* . But he found himself fascinated by the way the blood looked beautiful on Hannibal's face and his heart twisted maliciously and Will dropped his hand in pained frustration. He couldn't bear to hurt Hannibal, not really. Hannibal had quite literally slaughtered him, had gutted him like a fish in mockery of Will's attempt to 'lure' him, and yet Will could not find it within himself to either take Hannibal's life or even break his bones.

As his hand fell away, the breaking wheel loosened and Hannibal fell from it, heaving. He'd injured his heel in the fall and was limping when he pulled himself to his feet. Will glanced over at him and was pleased to note he could still find satisfaction in the way that Hannibal's

face sported cuts from Will's broken glass and the blood that painted Hannibal's skin. Hannibal glanced around rapidly, obviously trying to figure out what the hell had just happened to him. His eyebrows were drawn in confusion and he kept shaking his head minutely, as if dismissing theories from his head. Finally, Hannibal gave a final cursory glance around the room before he withdrew and began to limp steadily home.

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Hannibal ran a hand over his face, staring at the blood that he wiped off in bewilderment. His ankle was killing him and his shoulder ached, not to mention the fact it felt as if he'd fallen on some of the glass in front of the breaking wheel and it had cut into his leg. Without glancing down to check, he had a feeling the gash would need stitches.

Hannibal shut the apartment door behind him, limping to the bathroom to run himself a bath. At the squeak of a door, he glanced up to find Bedelia withdrawing from the bedroom, looking him over with barely concealed amusement. He scowled minutely at her before he turned back to the bath, turning off the taps before he allowed himself to sink into the liquid warmth.

As he lowered himself into the water, blood bloomed to the surface, clinging to the water like a loose film. He suppressed a sharp exhale as the gash on his leg was submerged, allowing the sting to spread across his skin. He heard Bedelia enter the bathroom behind him and raised an eyebrow. She didn't say anything, sitting on a stool next to the tub quietly. She motioned for him to raise his leg and he did so, draping his leg across the edge. Bedelia pulled a first aid kit forward and began to pick the leftover glass from his leg, cleaning the wound thoroughly before she then stitched it closed.

She did the same to his face, only having to stitch one of the small gashes on his cheek. Once all of his injuries had been tended to, she leant back and looked at him, her gaze perfunctory and calculating.

"There are forces descending upon you, Hannibal. Elements out of your control. You are that lost little boy once again, roaming through the cold Lithuanian woods, starving for something you cannot name. Just as you set yourself up as a predator, so does the one who stalks you. Who's hunting you, Hannibal?"

Hannibal pursed his lips slightly, glancing down to watch his own fingers skim through the blood in the water.

"Our eyes often deceive us. Shadows loom unnamed by the forest line, but we carry on through the underbrush still. I shall endeavour to do the same" Hannibal said, evading the question entirely. Yet Bedelia had always read him quite clearly; she thought too much like him to avoid that inevitability.

“You were attacked by the same force that shot glass through us just last night, weren’t you, Hannibal? Except perhaps you were more of a target this time than simply collateral damage.”

“Perhaps.”

Bedelia handed him a towel as Hannibal stood and he took it gratefully. Not one prone to self-consciousness, he had hardly tried to hide himself from her, but he felt unusually exposed tonight.

“What is it? This force that plagues you so?” she asked, washing her hands of his blood and applying lotion to her skin as if this were the most natural conversation in the world.

Hannibal hesitated, unsure. Yet he was equally keen not to be seen as unsure or bothered by the experience so he donned an expression that communicated cool indifference.

“I am not positive. Though it possesses a sort of familiarity to me… not unlike a memory that can only be accessed when you have viewed a picture of the event itself. It hovers at the corners of my consciousness, yet I do not currently possess the language necessary to provide a more accurate account of this energy source,” Hannibal said, wrapping himself in a silk maroon robe before settling by the piano. Bedelia did not respond, just gazed at him with an inscrutable expression before at last she turned away and retreated to the bedroom.

Hannibal sighed and reached for the wine she’d left for him. He sipped at it yet found it to be quite tasteless once again, as had nearly everything else been since his separation from Will. Hannibal could still hear Will’s voice ringing in his ears, calling out to him from the shadows, “ *Hannibal...I forgive you…”* Hannibal’s heart soared in his chest and his fingers began to tingle; a melody, once composed for Will when they’d been separated during Will’s imprisonment, drifted to the forefront of his mind and his fingers danced across the ivory. The sweet and terrible sound of his connection with Will filled his ears and he lost himself to the music. Unbeknownst to Hannibal, a vaguely translucent Will was shining brightly as he stood behind him, tears brimming in his eyes as he leant his head back and allowed himself to wade into that quiet melody, a brief yet easy peace.

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Will didn’t feel an ounce of guilt as he watched Hannibal limp out of the Florentine apartment the next morning. In fact, he felt a deep satisfaction and a lingering possessiveness when he looked at the stitched wound on Hannibal’s cheek and knew it would scar. Even in death, Will had managed to mark Hannibal once again. For now, it was enough.

Until it wasn’t.

Which happened to be half an hour later, when Hannibal passed the *palazzo capponi* and kept walking. Will frowned. It wasn’t like Hannibal to miss work. Yet Hannibal kept limping

down the road, pushing past others in the crowded street before he came to a stop outside the Uffizi Gallery.

Tourists swelled at the entrance and Will lost sight of Hannibal as he slipped inside the gallery with the others. Annoyed, Will opted to just walk straight through the wall next to the entrance, bypassing the crowd. Yet when he entered the grand foyer, he couldn't find Hannibal. He immediately thought to look for atrociously patterned suits but then remembered Hannibal had worn dark and muted colors today, as if he were subconsciously in mourning.

Will walked among the living, casting uninterested glances at the ancient paintings adorning the walls. He had been so focused on watching a man lean forward to kiss his husband on the forehead with a twinge of jealousy that he didn't see the woman in front of him, and Will ended up walking straight *through* her. It felt vaguely like walking through a thick liquid- *soup, perhaps?* - and then Will looked behind him to see the lady shiver as if she'd just been drenched in ice-cold water. Will laughed softly. He had to see the humor in it lest he start bemoaning his fate once again.

Will sobered up quickly though when he entered a small room at the end of a long hallway off the right wing of the gallery. The room was empty save one man, sitting on a bench in the center of the room, gazing at a large Botticelli painting on the wall in front of him. A small sigh escaped Will's lips and his heart clenched. *Hannibal.*

Hannibal was sketching, his pencil moving lightly across the paper in his lap. He sat quite still, focused as he added detail to his work. Hannibal's hair wasn't styled today; instead, it fell across his face softly, giving him a more youthful appearance. He looked so relaxed, so peaceful, and Will leaned forward to peer over his shoulder and felt his breath catch in his throat. Hannibal was drawing *him* . In place of Zephyrus, Hannibal had drawn Will. Hannibal appeared to be overcome with *fondness* as he shaded in Will's facial hair, smiling softly.

Suddenly, it wasn't enough anymore. It wasn't enough to change the winds around Hannibal and whisper to him from the depths of the grave. It was no longer enough to assault him and watch him bleed; it wasn't enough to mark him as retribution for his transgressions. It wasn't enough for Will, to watch Hannibal from the shadows, always unseen, as Hannibal yearned for him while Will yearned for him in return.

Will began to pace anxiously as a prodigious sensation rose within him. He walked back to the entrance of the room, momentarily tempted to flee. But then he glanced over his shoulder and his heart melted; he had spent so very long chasing Hannibal and he wanted nothing more than to be found at long last.

The sensation- which was now causing his skin to tingle across his whole person- was an unfamiliar one. It was similar to the swells of anger that sometimes overcame Will, but only in its intensity. This feeling itself was remarkably lighter, warm. It felt as if fire were burning in his very soul, but there was a purity in this instinct to consume, this desire to *unite* .

Fuck. I'm in love with Hannibal Lecter .

Will knew it was true the moment he thought it. He couldn't help but smile at the irony and tragedy of it all, his eyes brimming a bit. His chest ached and *god I want to hold him. I want nothing more than to be seen by him once again* . Will stilled as he felt a wave of warmth spread over him. He momentarily felt like television static, jumbled and pixelated. But as quick as it came, it was then over. And then Will knew.

He knew he would be visible to Hannibal now. Hannibal would be able to *see* him.

Will took a deep breath, hovering at the door for a moment longer, before he smoothed the lapels of the navy suit he'd gained in the rearrangement and took a tentative step forward. And then another. And then Will was sitting down on the bench next to Hannibal, powerful enough to keep himself from falling through the bench. Will looked at Hannibal and flashed him a genuine half-smile. He couldn't help the way he eagerly scanned Hannibal's face, reveling in the recognition he saw there that confirmed Hannibal could see Will too.

Hannibal's lips lifted in a slight smile, genuinely pleased. His gaze raked over Will hungrily, appreciatively. Will felt himself trapped by the intensity of Hannibal's dark gaze, as if he were pinned to the spot he sat.

"If I saw you everyday, forever, Will, I would remember this time," Hannibal said. Will's heart dropped as he heard the words fall from Hannibal's lips, such gentleness a jarring contrast to the feel of the blade buried in his belly. Yet Will couldn't help the soft laugh that fell from him, forever fond of Hannibal waxing poetic.

"Strange, seeing you here in front of me," Will said. Hannibal cocked his head in interest. "I've been staring at afterimages of you in places you haven't been in years."

Hannibal stilled slightly at that, but the moment passed quickly.

"To market, to market, to buy a fat pig. Home again, home again, jiggity-jig," said Hannibal, obviously deflecting from the pain the mention of his childhood home must have stirred within him. Will needed Hannibal to know he hadn't visited to hurt Hannibal. He'd *needed* to.

"I wanted to understand you," he said softly, "before I laid eyes on you again. I needed it to be...clear, what I was seeing."

Hannibal gazed at him, face blank.

"Where does the difference between the past and the future come from?" Hannibal asked.

Will wanted to scoff. All he had was past, no future. Hannibal had given him punctuation, a period to end his story. Yet there was no way to best explain that now, especially given Hannibal still obviously perceived Will as alive.

"Mine? Before you and after you," Will said. And it was so true. Hannibal was his conclusion. Will's existence ended and began with Hannibal.

“Yours?” Will continued, “It’s all starting to blur.” He pointedly made eye contact with Hannibal, remembering the sweet soul he’d met in the gardens of Lecter Castle.

“Mischa,” he said softly. Then, bright blue eyes and long brown hair. “Abigail.”

Hannibal had the decency to look away, his eyes falling at the mention of his sister’s name. Will felt a burst of empathy for Hannibal, longed to reach out and touch him. Yet he knew that would never be possible, not really. Yet Will could feel himself drawn so powerfully to the man next to him, could feel an almost-tangible tether only growing stronger the longer Will sat next to him. Yet he couldn’t find the will to save himself and stop the tether from growing in strength. He would take the risk, would risk the blurring of their existences. Hannibal gazed at him, and there it was again, the magnetic pull. Will closed his eyes and sighed before looking at Hannibal from under his eyelashes.

“You and I have begun to blur,” he said. He knew he’d stated it flatly, where it could be taken as a burden or a gift.

Hannibal dropped his gaze once again, almost sad.

“Isn’t that how you found me?” Hannibal said, quick to remind Will that he used their connection to his advantage just as Hannibal did.

Will blinked slowly. He really shouldn’t drag this out any longer.

“Something like that,” he said, smiling sadly. “We’re conjoined. I’m not sure whether either of us could survive separation.” Of course when Will said it, he meant survive in the poetic sense. Will was already ‘surviving’ with the separation of life and death between them. Will still wasn’t sure if Hannibal could.

“Now is the hardest test, not letting rage or frustration, nor forgiveness, keep you from thinking,” Hannibal said. Will felt as if it were a warning, Hannibal’s way of cautioning him of any of his plans of violent retribution. Will wasn’t so sure such a warning was needed; though Will still longed to slit Hannibal’s throat in a divinely righteous act of reciprocity, he didn’t wish this state of non-living on anyone, not even Hannibal. Especially not Hannibal. It was so *cold* here, and Will could hardly bear it.

“I have already forgiven you, Hannibal, as I told you in Palermo. You already forgave me in Baltimore, and took Abigail as my punishment. What egregious sin have I now committed that demands your forgiveness, once again?” Will asked, raising an eyebrow at Hannibal. Hannibal merely stared back at him, expression still dark. Will knew he was thinking of his earlier confession to Bedelia, that eating Will would be the only way to forgive Will of the influence he held over him.

“I could never entirely predict you, Will. I was certain you would once again seek to divest me of my life, perhaps with a blade forged from forgiveness?” Hannibal said. Will could only offer a sad smile in return.

“By saying you could never entirely predict *me* , you assume there are many things you *can* entirely predict,” Will said, his tone hard. Hannibal frowned, unsure of Will’s point.

“My experience has afforded me the luxury,” Hannibal stated simply. Will quelled the anger rising within him in the face of Hannibal’s hubris. *Greek mythology would caution that we all fall in the end. Even the gods. It was just Hannibal’s turn now.*

“You have taken note from the birds above you and assumed the same logic applied to you; you have flown too close to the sun, Hannibal, and your wings are melting,” Will stated as calmly as he could. Hannibal’s face froze and Will watched as his microexpressions rapidly shifted, many emotions flitting across his face as pieces of the puzzle began to come together at last.

“And the fall to the sea below me, in which I am fated to drown? What precipitates my fall?” Hannibal asked, his voice uncharacteristically soft. Will felt his own face falter as his eyes blinked rapidly.

“I think you already know, Hannibal,” Will said.

“You. You are my Sun, Will. That which I consistently pursue, yet you are likewise destined to be my downfall. Have I flown too close in my pursuit of you?” Hannibal’s eyes widened then and his gaze shot back to lock with Will’s.

“I notice a particular absence. An absence of your atrocious aftershave,” Hannibal said. His eyebrows furrowed. “In fact, I cannot smell you at all… What have I done, Will?” he said, raising his eyes to meet Will’s once again, fear blossoming in the pools of his irises.

Will closed his eyes briefly, his heart ripping itself in half as he struggled to form the words. When he opened his eyes, he felt tears fall from his face and watched in surprise as Hannibal’s own eyes brimmed with tears.

“Dearest Will, what have I done?” Hannibal asked, still refusing to acknowledge the obvious. His voice cracked slightly and Will steeled himself for what came next.

“Touch me. Hold my face, Hannibal,” Will said, voice shaky. A pained grimace broke through Hannibal’s person suit as he raised his hand slowly to Will’s face. Hannibal moved to cup Will’s jaw, a recreation of that fateful night in Hannibal’s kitchen, but this time Hannibal’s hand never made contact with Will’s skin.

Will closed his eyes as he felt the strange feeling of Hannibal’s hand press *through* his head. He only opened his eyes when he heard the sound of Hannibal’s hand drop down to his lap, dejected. Hannibal wasn’t looking at him, was focused on some point far away, his head turned from Will’s. A few tears fell silently from Hannibal, dripping down his face before falling from his face to dot across his sweater. Several minutes- perhaps hours, Will didn’t really know- passed by and yet Hannibal did not turn back to him or speak a word.

“Hannibal.”

No response.

“Hannibal,” Will said again, louder.

“Hannibal, *please* , look at me,” Will said, desperation creeping into his own voice. The panic in Will’s voice roused Hannibal from his detached state and the man turned to him at last, the person suit back in place with an eerily blank and detached expression.

Will sustained eye contact with Hannibal as he stood and turned to Hannibal, slowly raising his shirt to show Hannibal his bare stomach, devoid of any gash or scarring. Hannibal stared at it for several minutes before Will lowered his shirt again.

“Truly look at me, Hannibal, knowing what I am,” Will said again, willing Hannibal to see him in his true form. Hannibal looked away from Will’s eyes, taking in Will’s appearance. Will felt a slight shiver in his own body before he looked down to see himself turn slightly more translucent than before, light emanating slightly from his frame. He could see his own faint shine reflected in Hannibal’s dark eyes before Hannibal finally lowered his gaze. Hannibal didn’t say anything.

Unbeknownst to them, it would be quite some time before Hannibal would regain the ability to say anything at all.

Chapter End Notes

as always, thank you for reading/commenting/leaving kudos!!! I can't even express how much it means to me <3

I finally have a chapter count figured out; as it stands, I'll probably write three more chapters, so 9 total unless i find the writing taking me further!

more feels up ahead 🥺

To Be Fully Aware (of You)

Chapter Notes

> Hi everyone !!! This story is constantly evolving (on the detail level, that is) and I wanted to go ahead and just warn about a few themes that will be presented in this chapter and likely through the next ones as well.
>
> tw: suicidal thoughts/ideation; post-traumatic stress

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal had barely moved for two whole days. At Will's insistence, they had finally left the Uffizi Gallery and had walked back to the apartment in silence. Once inside, Hannibal withdrew to one of the guest bedrooms, intent on avoiding Bedelia, and locked himself inside. He then took up residence by the window, settling onto the wide ledge and gazing across the Florentine skyline for hours on end. Hannibal wasn't sure where Will was; he wondered briefly if Will had made himself invisible again, but he couldn't summon the energy to turn his head and check.

The sun set and then rose, only to set again. When the sun rose on the third day, Hannibal shut his eyes against the growing brightness, willing it away. His eyes stung from lack of sleep and from the incessant rubbing he'd inflicted on them to halt the tears from escaping. Hannibal squinted his eyes back open, watching how the sun with its orange and red hues caused the city to look as if it were being consumed by flames. He wished the flames would take him as well.

He didn't even bother to glance over when the bedroom door was thrown open and banged against the wall loudly. He saw the faint shimmer of Will's outline and shut his eyes, his hand flinching reflexively as he gave a brief thought to gouging them out so as to avoid seeing Will like this. *Dead* .

He tightened his jaw to keep his teeth from chattering as Will drew closer, the chill he brought with him washing over Hannibal. Goosebumps broke out across his flesh but he made no move to warm the accosted area; instead, he imagined the ice melting into his veins, becoming one with his frozen heart.

"Hannibal," came Will's soft voice. "You need to drink something." Will was levitating a glass of water nearby and Hannibal shook his head, preferring the parched feeling in his throat. At least if he could feel the pain, he knew he could still feel after all.

"Please, Hannibal," Will whispered. Hannibal closed his eyes again and leant his head back against the wall behind him and sighed. Will had seen him respond positively to the word *once* and had been quick to use it to his advantage, knowing Hannibal would not deny him.

Hannibal begrudgingly opened his eyes and located the hovering water glass, taking it without looking Will in the eyes. He downed half the glass before setting it to the side. He looked up at Will.

Even in death, he's more beautiful than ever. Radiant, I daresay. Love is a god, and Will is Him.

Will's face was neutrally composed, closed to Hannibal's prying eyes. But the longer Hannibal stared, the more Will seemed to lose his resolve, emotions breaking through the surface. Anger, hurt, something almost fond.

"Will you talk to me now?" Will asked, sitting on the corner of the bed. Hannibal noticed how the sheets didn't crinkle underneath him. It was a distressing sight.

He looked back up at Will. He shook his head.

"Do you at least want to hear what happened?"

He didn't. Not really. Hearing it would make it more real. It couldn't be real. He shook his head again.

Will scoffed.

"Too bad, Hannibal. I'm telling you anyway," Will said, fixing Hannibal with a glare. Hannibal cocked his head in interest, unable to resist his own curiosity.

"I lost a lot of blood, after you left. I tried to save Abigail. Apparently I lost a lot of blood when I crawled across the floor and used my hands to help her instead of putting pressure on my own wound. But you had accounted for that, hadn't you?"

Hannibal didn't respond, though of course Will was right. He did know Will, after all.

"Well, even you in your *goddamn* infinite wisdom, Hannibal, cannot control or predict everything. ERT arrived minutes after you left. I was loaded into the ambulance, and was on the way to the hospital. But there was traffic and the driver thought he knew a detour… and said 'detour' added an extra half hour to the trip. I bled out in the ambulance. I died because you assumed *you could control it all* ," Will said, his voice growing more heated. He stood and began to pace, his face contorting in anger. Will didn't seem to notice that the window pane next to Hannibal was shaking, as were the walls and various knickknacks throughout the room.

" *You* ," Will snarled, his lip curling in disdain, "you and your *fucking* arrogance, Hannibal. You fancy yourself a god, assume that everything will work the way you want it to, *because you want it to* , but that's not how life works. That's not how *death* works," Will said, his voice shaking. Tears began to stream down his face and Hannibal's heart felt as if it were tearing itself to pieces and disintegrating on the spot. He looked away from Will's face.

"Don't you *dare* . Don't you dare turn your face away from me right now, as if you couldn't bear the sight. Look at what you did, Hannibal!" Will cried, throwing his arms up in the air in

distress. Hannibal obeyed, raising his eyes to Will's. This time, he couldn't control the tears in his own eyes even if he wanted to. They fell in a hot stream down his face. He hadn't cried like this in so long he was unfamiliar with what it felt like.

"Look at me," Will said, his voice cracking as he lowered it. "I'm nothing now; I'm merely shadow, suspended in dust. My body, the flesh you once caressed, is nothing but dirt now, Hannibal. You got what you wanted. You turned me into *nothing* ."

A deep ache spread throughout Hannibal's chest and it was too much; he'd never once felt a hurt so deep, save that Lithuanian winter long, long ago, and he didn't know how to handle it. He just shook his head at Will, trying to tell him *no, that's not what I wanted at all, you're not nothing, Will, you're everything,* but when he opened his mouth to speak no sound would come out. He tried to speak again, his vocal chords restricting with the effort, and Will watched him struggle before he sneered in cool contempt and turned to walk from the room.

Will's sudden absence set something off in Hannibal. It suddenly felt all the more real, and he kept seeing Will's anguished face every time he closed his eyes. He folded in on himself, wrapping his arms around his legs tightly. He couldn't stop the sobs that shuddered through his chest and silently wracked his body. He ground the heels of his palms into his eyes to stop the tears and bit his lips to keep from making a sound. *My dearest Will….*

***

Will was still fuming, walking circles through the living room in an effort to calm himself down. *What is Hannibal playing at, refusing to talk with me?* Hannibal's lack of communication with him was only adding insult to injury and Will was tempted to haul one of the sharpest kitchen knives back into that bedroom and slit Hannibal's throat and be done with it.

But every time Will had one of these thoughts, the next thought was inevitable. *I don't want Hannibal to die* . Will didn't want Hannibal to feel the emptiness, the *ice* that accompanied the world of the dead. He didn't think he could bear it to be the one who took Hannibal's ability to smile.

Love, being the stubborn emotion that it is, had wound itself back into Will's heart and he collapsed in a heap to the ground below him. He idly hovered some of Hannibal's ridiculously intricate chess pieces in the air before him as he reflected quietly. If he were being honest with himself, it hurt to see Hannibal this way, and it hurt even more that Hannibal wouldn't talk to him.

After half an hour more of silent contemplation, and a fair bit of launching flying objects towards Bedelia, who still couldn't see him, Will grew bored once again and decided that since it was Hannibal's fault he was dead, the man at least owed him some halfway decent conversation. Telling himself sternly to *keep cool* , he entered the bedroom once again, unsurprised to see Hannibal hadn't changed position since he'd left.

"Hannibal. You need to eat. Can you do that for me?"

Hannibal stared at him blankly. Will sighed inwardly.

“Please. I need this, Hannibal. Please,” he added. Hannibal’s face softened then, and Will knew he’d won.

Hannibal walked out to the kitchen and coaxed down a bowl of soup, though he hardly seemed to appreciate his own creation as he once would have done. After prompting him to drink another glass of water, Will let Hannibal return to the bedroom to shower while Will waited in the living room.

When Hannibal emerged half an hour later, he looked much better. His skin was tinged pink with the warmth of the shower and Will envied that. He’d give anything to feel warmth again. The only time he’d felt it had been when he’d touched hands with Mischa and Abigail. The world of the living only brought a chill, just as the world of the dead brought only chill to the living. *How poetic.*

Hannibal stood across the living room from Will, looking uncertain for once in his life. If it hadn’t been so serious a situation, Will may have found it amusing. But as it stood, Hannibal’s uncertainty only deepend the ache in Will’s own chest and he found himself taking the lead, whereas Hannibal had always been the one to do so for him in the past.

“Please, Hannibal, sit down,” Will said tiredly. Hannibal stared at him blankly for a beat before he gingerly lowered himself to an armchair, across from an identical chair Will now sat in (or rather, hovered above), the chessboard and its hovering pieces between them. Hannibal glanced down at the board and then looked away. Will know what Hannibal had been thinking.

“You think our match is over, don’t you?” Will said, spreading his legs wider as he leant forward in his chair, almost in a mockery of their therapy sessions. Hannibal’s amber eyes locked with his and Will felt his heart jump in his chest. If he still had a pulse, he’d wager it would have started racing.

Hannibal didn’t respond, opting instead to watch Will closely through his eyes which, despite their overall haunted look, were gleaming again with his tell-tale intrigue.

“You assume that my death translates to your decisive victory. Your blade as checkmate, my fall as surrender. You see yet you do not understand, Hannibal; for us, there can be no decisive victory. When one of us wins, we both lose and when one loses, both win. We’re a paradox. I’m not supposed to be here with you, yet it is the only thing I *can* do.”

Hannibal had a question buried in his eyes and Will prompted him to ask his question, but Hannibal just stared blankly again. He seemed agitated, frustrated. He opened his mouth to speak and no sound came out. This time, Will could see the panic in Hannibal’s eyes. Though he tried to conceal it, Will knew what each of those microexpressions meant, and Hannibal’s current expression suggested panic. Hannibal was mute.

“Hannibal…?” Will asked tentatively, lowering his gaze in an effort to meet Hannibal’s eyes. When Hannibal didn’t meet his glance nor respond, Will grew more irritated.

“Look at me,” he snapped. Hannibal froze at the uncommon harsh directness in Will’s tone but obeyed nonetheless, turning his gaze to Will’s. Seeing the vulnerability in his eyes, Will’s heart softened a bit.

“You can’t talk, can you, Hannibal? You’ve gone mute,” Will said gently. Hannibal’s warm brown eyes seemed to waver; child-like fear reflected in his pupils. But eventually, Hannibal nodded.

“Has this ever happened to you before?”

Another nod.

Will furrowed his eyebrows. Selective mutism typically presented in childhood, often as a result of post-traumatic stress. Will couldn’t understand why Hannibal would develop it now, as not only an adult but the type of man that he was. *Unless…*

“Mischa,” Will said softly. Hannibal lowered his gaze and nodded. Suddenly, the child-like fear Will had seen in Hannibal’s eyes made so much more sense. Hannibal had only ever felt such a deep grief one other time in his life, with Mischa. He didn’t know how to handle the same tragedy presenting itself again, with the only other person Hannibal cared for aside from his sister. *Perhaps even loved…*

Will’s heart twisted painfully once again. He hated Hannibal for making him love him and hated himself for loving the man across from him. But there was nothing Will could possibly do. Hannibal was his entire universe, and the gnawing in his soul wouldn’t allow him to see Hannibal in this state.

“I think I have an idea about how we can fix your issue…”

***

Hannibal raised his eyebrows at Will, not bothering to hide his skepticism. Will motioned between the two of them, sitting in armchairs across from each other, and the significance of the setup was not lost on Hannibal.

“It’s time for some therapy, *Dr. Lecter,* ” Will said in that dangerously seductive tone that drove Hannibal mad. Or at least normally drove him mad. In the present moment the only thing Hannibal could feel was miserable.

But Hannibal was also never one to back down from a challenge. So instead, he simply lifted his chin at Will in acquiescence.

“This therapy is primarily one-sided,” Will began. “In other words, I’m going to tell you something and your job is to believe what I say as a true accounting of my experience. I anticipate some of the details of my account will bring you some peace. And if I haven’t made it clear, I do want that for you, Hannibal. On this specific matter, that is. Understood?”

Hannibal nodded, though largely unimpressed. He folded one leg over the other and tapped his foot in the air restlessly as he began listening to Will's story.

"There were several things I had to learn, after I died. I had to learn how to be dead, for one. There is no sleeping, no eating, no exhaustion. No ability to feel that which inhabits the world of the living.

"But I was determined. I wanted to feel… powerful. I taught myself how to manipulate the world around me, how to occupy the liminal space of the thin veil that separates our worlds. And when I finally had the ability and strength, I sailed the ocean to find you."

Hannibal's heart burst with a twisted sense of pride, quietly proud that Will had adapted so well to his new environment. Had adapted. Evolved. Became. There was also a part of Hannibal, a much more significant part, that warmed when Will said he'd sailed across the roiling Atlantic, just to find Hannibal. Hannibal had sent him a valentine- international post- and Will had come when called. Or so that's what he had thought.

"But I didn't just come to Italy when you called, Hannibal. I was already with you in Palermo. But before I came to Italy, I went to Lithuania first, as you had surmised. But I want to tell you about what I saw there."

The one place I can never go .

Hannibal blinked and averted his gaze, shaking his head firmly as he brushed dust from his jacket. He sniffed and resituated before looking back up at Will, who was watching him intently.

"Mischa."

Hannibal froze. *No.*

He shook his head violently this time and could feel the flames of anger and pain roaring to life inside of his chest. He clenched his fists in his lap so hard he watched his knuckles turn white.

"She was beautiful, Hannibal," Will said softly. Hannibal kept still, eyes locked on a place far away from Will, but his ears couldn't help but readily lap up every word Will was feeding them.

"I stumbled upon her while I stood in your cochlear garden. I heard a child's laughter, and I turned to see a little girl, no more than four years old, with golden hair that hung around her face in curls and bright brown eyes. Your eyes," Will said.

Hannibal wasn't sure if he was breathing anymore. He wasn't entirely sure he remembered how.

"She played around me, like any other happy child. I asked her name and she drew an *M* in the dirt and said 'M is for Mischa!'"

He had taught her that phrase, had drawn the first *M* for her. Hannibal felt the tears gather in his eyes and made no effort to stop them this time. Somehow he felt it would dishonor Mischa if he did.

“She called you ‘Anniba,’” Will added.

Tears ran steadily down Hannibal’s face now. He could still hear the childish inflection of his name on her tongue.

Hannibal hadn’t been able to take much more after that, and Will had seen fit to stop his story there for the day. The rest of the day, Will was quiet, and Hannibal could feel the man’s gaze on him as he thought of Mischa. He’d eaten to appease Will, and had even tried to sleep, though it did not come to him. He could hardly sleep when Will sat in a chair not ten feet away from his bedside, staring out into the night. Hannibal was fixated on the way the moonlight filtered *through* Will’s translucence and gave him an even more heavenly appearance. *Beautiful. Cold, and sad, and suffering, but breathtakingly beautiful* .

Over the next couple of days, Will would repeatedly break the silence by motioning for Hannibal to sit across from him to tell more of his time in Lithuania. He told Hannibal about the way Mischa had given him a tour of the castle. How Mischa had held his hand. How Mischa kept her killer a prisoner after all of these years.

Hannibal’s eyes shot up at that, surprised. He’d left the man there to die by starvation as he deserved. He hadn’t counted on Mischa’s ghost feeding him enough to keep him alive for decades.

“I killed him.”

What?

Hannibal stared at Will in confusion. Will gave a long winded sigh before he dove into a brief explanation of tethers, and how Mischa had been tethered to this cursed half-life half-death because she was unable to move on from her killer.

“I wanted her… to know peace. To be free of this place. So I killed him. Drove shards of glass through him, his blood mixing with the spilled wine. And then Mischa saw him, and it brought her peace. I watched her ‘move on’ minutes later in the cochlear garden, her bright light becoming one with the lights of a hundred fireflies. It was beautiful, Hannibal.”

Dearest Mischa. Hannibal closed his eyes, could clearly *see* the spectacular image before him as if he were viewing it straight from Will’s memory palace itself. To know that she was okay, that she was no longer tortured, soothed Hannibal’s soul.

“She didn’t want to leave without you. She asked about you. I told her you wanted her to go on, that you didn’t want her stuck here. She seemed to understand that. And then she ran inside to grab a wooden swan, which I presume you carved for her. And then she went happily.”

Hannibal could remember the day he'd whittled the swan, and the smile Mischa had given him when he'd presented it to her as a Christmas gift. The winter before *that* winter. All of these details had brought Hannibal some peace, had soothed some of the trauma that had been brought up by Will's appearance. Yet as much as he loved Mischa, it was what Will told him next that shattered the remaining fort in this particular problem area of his bone arena.

"I displayed him. Mischa's killer. After I killed him, I gave him wings made of broken glass and cocooned him in twine. I covered him in cochlea and hung him from the rafters in your wine cellar. That's how Mischa saw him. Death, elevated to Art. Just as you would have done."

Will paused for a moment and took a shaky breath. Hannibal sought those bright blue eyes and was rewarded when Will finally met his glance.

"I… displayed him *for* you. It was an homage to you, the orchestrator to my own becoming. I honored him because I wanted to… I wanted to honor *you* ," Will said softly, his eyelids flickering with the weight of his confession.

"Even after everything. After you *killed me* and took *everything* from me, Hannibal, I fucking *honored* you. Were you really so blind to how deeply I cared for you?" Will asked, his voice breaking as it tumbled over a sob.

Hannibal searched Will's face, and could see the anguish in his piercing blue eyes. He could also see the fondness for Hannibal that softened every angle on his face, and knew in his heart that he did know how deeply Will cared for him. Because Will cared for Hannibal in the same way Hannibal did for Will.

The realization that they shared something so *deep* , so *profound* as this, was so powerful that it could have brought Hannibal to his knees had he been standing. *I've been such a fool. He was right. My wings of wax have been burned by his ring of fire and to the ocean below me, I fall. May as well make the Fall a tale worth telling.*

"Me freeing myself from you… and you, freeing yourself from me… they are the same," Hannibal said, his voice hoarse and rough from a week in disuse.

Will's eyes widened and he flashed Hannibal a genuine smile, pleased Hannibal had found his voice once again. Hannibal wondered if he also smiled because he understood the subtext of what he'd just said.

"We've both tried to… *free* … ourselves from the other, through violence and threats of death, though only one of us followed through on it-"

"Unintentionally."

Will leveled Hannibal with a glare and Hannibal gave a minute shrug of his shoulders. Seeing that Will was not amused, he leant forward in his chair, staring at Will earnestly.

"You are *everything* , Will. I did not intend for you to die. In fact, I had every confidence you would heal in a few months and I'd find you here before me once again, whole but with a

reminder to not cross me again," Hannibal said. Then softly, brokenly, "I never wanted you to die."

Will visibly blinked back several tears before he rubbed them away with his hands.

"You know why we try to free ourselves of the other, and why they are the same, right?" Will asked, face guarded. Hannibal gave him a sad smile.

"Yes, I believe I do, at last, understand."

Will was quiet for a moment and Hannibal waited patiently, for he could feel there was another question coming.

"I had a dream once, where in it I was trying to free myself of you. You stood before me calmly, and told me that 'we are never fully aware of another human being unless we love them.' I want to know, Hannibal. Are you fully aware of me, even now?"

Hannibal swallowed harshly, pain ripping through his chest as he gazed upon the undead form of his beloved. A condition which he had caused; an event he would never forgive himself for.

"Yes," he answered simply, though his voice was gruff with barely restrained emotion.

Will gave him a soft half-smile in return, a reminder of times in Baltimore.

"I know you now, Hannibal. I stumbled down the halls of your beginnings; I feel every part of you as if you are part of me, perhaps the whole of me. I never know myself as well as I know myself when I'm with you, Hannibal. And when I am with you, or even an ocean away, I know now that I *am* fully aware of you, too."

Chapter End Notes

thank you for reading!!! I know this chapter was a bit shorter than usual, but it was the best place to cut it off for a chapter ending.

also, I'm a liar and have changed the chapter count. It's not going to be 9 chapters, probably somewhere between 10-12 (?) I'm just following the story honestly !! I will give a warning before I post the last two chapters though! those two will be posted together for... reasons :)

anyway i love all of you!!! thanks for reading <3

Stay With Me (Where Else Would I Go?)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

****

I know it's just the remnants

I'm only feeling handprints of your past aggressions

I'm just playing with your shadow

You're the phantom limbs

A ghost hanging off of my skin

I could reach out and touch you, I swear

But you're not really there

- Phantom Pains, song by Nicole Dollanganger

****

Hannibal's breath caught in his throat. He must have misunderstood. Or perhaps he hadn't heard Will correctly. The words ran in a loop in his head, *"I know now that I am fully aware of you, too." Did Will really say that? Did Will mean… that he was in love with Hannibal, too?* Hannibal searched Will's eyes, finding only truth and the rough edges of Will's love in the seafoam eyes across from him.

"Will…," Hannibal said, annoyed with how soft his own voice sounded. Hannibal instinctively reached for Will's hand across the table between them and felt Will's hand slip through his fingers. Chills ran up his arm and Hannibal jerked his arm back. He'd completely forgotten. Will glared at him, storm clouds of anger and grief gathering in his eyes once again. Hannibal couldn't resist the urge to stare at his own fingertips where, instead of Will's warm hands, Hannibal had felt only a drop in temperature and a faint shimmer of energy. It was nauseating. And when Hannibal looked up and saw Will glancing away from him with, his jaw set in an angry hurt but his eyes brimming with tears, it was too much. Even for Hannibal.

He waited for a few moments, silent, and then politely excused himself. He walked back to the guest bedroom he'd been staying in- honestly, if he saw Bedelia now, he'd probably snap her neck- and closed the door quietly behind him.

Once alone, Hannibal sank down to the floor and leaned against the end of the bed. He glanced down at his hands, folded in his lap, and caught on the scars visible on his wrists. Scars that were *given* to him by his dearest Will. He reached out and ran a slightly calloused finger along the raised white scar. He closed his eyes, finding the repetitious movement of his finger over the scar to be calming. Comforting. He was touching a physical reminder of the passion that Will held for him. *I had wanted to give you the same, Will. I wonder- would you have laid in bed at night, cradling the scar I'd given you, as the gift it was? Tell me, Will, would you caress my mark on your skin, and think of me?*

A deep ache settled in his chest. A desire to *rip, tear, kill* . The feeling of ice in his veins, fog in his head, and an empty cavity in his chest where his heart should be. Hannibal opened his eyes and from his spot on the floor, he could see snow drifting from the ceiling, landing softly on the ground around him. He stared in wonder at first, but then in dawning horror as the snow seemed to fall impossibly fast. Now the snow around him was several feet high and he couldn't move; snow was swirling around him like a blizzard and suddenly Hannibal felt small. All he could see around him was the *damn snow, the snow of a Lithuanian winter* and Hannibal could feel his throat constrict again, his words stolen from him. Mischa's giggles filled his ears and then cut sharply to her screams. He tried to call out for her but his vocal chords were broken; the snow was piling on top of him.

Hannibal's heart was beating erratically and he reached impulsively for the comfort of Will's scar on his skin. Not feeling the familiar raised line on his skin, he glanced down in dismay to find that the scar was gone. And then so was the snow. It was just Hannibal, sitting on the floor of his Florentine apartment, but with skin devoid of Will's mark. Hannibal rubbed the smooth skin in frustration but paused when he saw a deep red in the corner of his eye. His glance shot to the door and he watched as thick, warm blood began to pour across the floor, coating every surface.

And then, directly in front of him, was Will. His dearest Will. Lying on his side in the sea of blood, his face mostly beneath the surface. He was bleeding profusely from his abdomen, but his hands had fallen to the side, useless. Will's eyes were glazed over, fixed on something far away. His breath was coming in sharp gasps, pained whimpers escaping his lips. Hannibal scrambled toward him and reached out, desperate to help, but felt sick when he looked down and saw the cruelly curved blade in his hand, dripping with Will's blood.

He dropped it and went to reach for Will again, but it was too late. As Hannibal rolled Will onto his back, Will gave one last pained exhale and then breathed no more. Hannibal held his hand to Will's gaping wound in his belly and then desperately tried chest compressions, pushing so hard that he heard one of Will's ribs snap. Yet his breath did not return, and Hannibal no longer felt a pulse. Will's eyes stared at him, unseeing and horrifically empty.

Hannibal slumped onto the ground next to Will and clutched him to his body. He rested Will's head on his chest and ran his bloody fingers through Will's damp curls, trying to stifle his own sobs. Will's body turned cold. Hannibal clutched at him tightly, murmuring *I'm sorry, I'm so sorry* against the chill of his cheek until he felt Will's body fade away and he was left trying to grasp thin air.

Hannibal sat back up and the macabre vision that had been before him had disappeared. He was himself again, sitting in his ordinary apartment, once again covered in the scars Will had designed. But the grief stayed. Hannibal couldn't get the image of a suffering and dying Will out of his mind and it threw Hannibal so thoroughly, for never had he felt the slightest bit of regret or grief following a kill. But Will, like always, was different.

I have killed the one my soul loves, and the only one who has ever loved my soul in return. I have slaughtered half of myself; there is a cavity in my chest where Will should be. If Love is a god, and Will is Him, I have killed God myself. Who am I, then, but Lucifer incarnate?

Hannibal thought of Dante's Inferno.

' *I did not die, and yet I lost life's breath.' Without Will, alive and well next to me, there is no Life, there is no breath.*

***

Hannibal had been locked up in his room for the past couple of hours, and Will had decided to leave him alone. After he'd essentially confessed to Hannibal that he was *in love* with him, which he certainly hadn't planned on doing, Will had watched with rising mortification as Hannibal reached out for his hand only to find his hand slipping through Will's. Will had flinched in reactive anger and then Hannibal's face became eerily blank and devoid of emotion.

Hannibal's sudden emotional withdrawal and impassive face had wounded Will, and Will had looked away as he felt tears gather in his eyes. *Just leave, Hannibal* . Hannibal got up and left, retreating to the bedroom. Will let his tears fall only when he heard the door shut.

Will sat in place for a while, berating himself for having admitted anything to Hannibal in the first place. But then he kept seeing Hannibal's imploring brown eyes glowing amber with intensity as Hannibal told Will he was *everything* and that he'd never intended for Will to die. Will felt as if he were being stabbed all over again; the chaotic emotions that spilled from his heart fell to his feet just like his blood had poured out of him. Will white-knuckeled himself through the pain.

An hour later, Bedelia walked into the apartment, her heels clacking loudly against the floor. She put a small bag on the kitchen counter and pulled out two bottles of wine and some white truffles and placed them with the rest of Hannibal's ingredients. Her hand hovered over a wine glass before she shrugged and took an entire bottle with her as she sauntered toward her bedroom. Will couldn't resist.

With a swish of his wrist, the wine bottle shattered and drenched Bedelia in the white wine. She turned around, huffing, searching for the offender.

"Who are you?" she snapped, looking everywhere but Will. He smirked.

“The real question is,” Will said, pleased when he felt his energy flow obediently, giving power to his voice, “who are you, Bedelia? The bride of Frankenstein?”

Bedelia froze, her face momentarily blank before it finally contorted into a scowl. Her eyes swept across the room, trying to locate him, and Will watched with amusement.

“We’ve both been his bride,” she snarled. “But if I were destined to be Bluebeard’s wife, I would have preferred to be the last. Fortunately for me, I am the last. The last living one, anyway,” she said.

Will had had enough.

“He’s going to eat you, you know. Slaughter you like the cattle you are, if I don’t do it first. I’d pack my bags if I were you, Bedelia. Meat’s back on the menu,” Will said, extremely pleased with himself. Bedelia looked downright murderous, the cool rage emanating from her like dry ice.

“You righteous, reckless, twitchy little man,” she sneered. “I’d watch my back if *I* were *you* , Graham. Even the dead aren’t invincible.”

Will scoffed as she slammed the door behind her as she went into her bedroom. He didn’t buy her threats for a minute.

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Bedelia fumed behind the closed doors. *The audacity of that man!* However, she had to admit, Hannibal had been acting strange, even for him. He had been avoiding her like the plague and she was also faintly sure he had gone mute, judging by the way he hadn’t given her any verbal answers when she’d prodded.

She knew Hannibal had been mute for three years after Mischa’s death, only recovering when he’d been taken in by his Uncle. Now knowing that the ghost that had been haunting them of late was Will Graham, it made much more sense why Hannibal would have regressed to childhood mutism. Finding out about Will’s death, which Bedelia knew he hadn’t planned, had triggered Hannibal’s post-traumatic stress. But as endlessly fascinating as Hannibal’s mind was, Bedelia knew Will had been right. It was time to pack her bags.

So Bedelia flew around her room, packing up her stuff quickly, not that it would have taken long anyway- she was always prepared for a quick exit from this particular chapter of her life. She grabbed her bags and slipped from her room quietly, tiptoeing to the front door of the apartment and slipping out. If Will was around, he didn’t try to stop her.

She took a train from Florence and headed North, not stopping until she reached Milan. When she arrived, she booked a small apartment for herself, unpacked, and then sat on her

porch as she debated her next move. *Now's as good a time as any* . She pulled out her phone and called Freddie Lounds.

"Hello?"

"Ms. Lounds," Bedelia greeted coolly. "I have it on good authority that you despise Will Graham as much as I do. Not to mention you wouldn't mind punishing the uncaught Chesapeake Ripper. Say yes if these things are true."

"...Yes," came the hesitant response.

"I have a proposition for you…"

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Will watched Bedelia sneak out of the flat without stopping her. *Good riddance* .

He sighed as he stretched out across the couch, glancing at the clock. It had been hours since Hannibal had disappeared. Will thought it was probably time he should check on him.

Will got up and walked through Hannibal's bedroom door, not bothering to announce his presence. But what he saw when he passed through the door brought him to a horrified halt.

Hannibal was standing on the open window's ledge, surveying the ground below him with a grim expression set in his face. Will began to panic. *No, no, no, no, please…*

"Hannibal," he said as calmly as he could manage, creeping closer to the window in the process. Hannibal stilled but did not turn back to look at him.

"Will," he said in a voice that was eerily calm, as if he were discussing the weather.

"Hannibal, get down from there, please. Don't do this," Will said, alarm bells ringing in his head. Images of Hannibal's mangled body on the sidewalk below the apartment flashed across his eyes and he tried to keep from shaking.

"You'll forgive me, Will, but I am afraid saying 'please' won't help you this time. I am quite decided in my decision," Hannibal said, letting one foot hover off of the ledge. In a full-blown panic now, Will hopped up to the wide ledge and stood next to Hannibal. He could feel Hannibal's gaze on him now, so he turned to look Hannibal in the eye.

Hannibal's cool exterior was cracking. Underneath, Will could see the self-loathing, pain, and anguish Hannibal was trying to conceal. His eyes told stories of the damned.

"I love you," Will blurted, surprising himself. Hannibal's eyes widened in shock which turned quickly to disbelief. He closed his eyes and Will could swear he saw a single tear fall.

“I do, Hannibal. You’re a selfish, manipulating, sadistic *bastard* , but I love you more than I ever loved my own heartbeat, or the rush of blood in my veins. Don’t you dare let my love go to waste. You would only hurt me if you took your life in front of me right now, as if it were nothing. You owe me more than that, Hannibal. If you love me as much as I love you, you won’t do this to me,” Will said, his voice hard. Hannibal glanced up at him, the sunlight reflected in the warmer notes of brown in his eyes, shimmering beneath a thin layer of unshed tears.

“Stay with me,” Hannibal said, his voice vulnerable and cracking like the thin shell of a robin’s egg.

“Where else would I go?” Will said, smiling softly as the words stirred a memory of Hannibal’s warm hands on his. Hannibal looked over Will’s face calculatingly before he nodded slightly, stepping off the ledge and back into the apartment with an effortless grace. Will swept a current of energy toward him and slammed Hannibal into the wall behind him. Will stalked closer and leaned forward, fixing Hannibal with a stern glare.

“Promise me. Promise me that you will never again try to take your own life. Your life belongs to me now, not you.”

The possessiveness in Will’s voice must have spoken to Hannibal, for Hannibal nodded obediently.

“I promise, Will,” he said gruffly. Will narrowed his eyes at Hannibal and then relaxed, releasing Hannibal from the grips of his anger. Hannibal slumped against the wall before sinking down to the floor, a defeated look on his face. Will sank down next to him and reached out tentatively, reaching for Hannibal’s hand. Hannibal’s eyes tracked the progress of Will’s hand, crinkling slightly when Will rested his hand over the top of Hannibal’s.

There was… *something* there. Not the feel of a true touch, per se, but Will could *feel* the lukewarm thrum of Hannibal’s unique life-force underneath his palm. It wasn’t warm enough to satisfy Will’s craving for *warmth* but it was something. He could technically feel *something* . Will kept his eyes stubbornly turned away from Hannibal’s face, knowing that Hannibal would want to pry into Will’s mind.

But for once, Hannibal didn’t press. Instead, he just leaned his head back against the wall and allowed himself a moment of peace.

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Hannibal couldn’t feel Will’s hand in the way someone could register the skin of another. But, he could *feel* it, could feel something. It felt like a whisper pressing into his skin, present enough to elicit a reaction within himself. It made him crave *more* , even though *more* was exactly what he couldn’t have. The goosebumps and tingle on his skin would have to be enough.

Will sat next to him, stretched out on the floor, for hours, never once moving his hand from Hannibal's. It warmed Hannibal's heart, almost enough to cover up the gaping hole of despair in the center of the organ. Almost enough.

When evening rolled around, Will persuaded Hannibal to eat again, and Hannibal felt some of his strength return. As he looked at the ghost of his beloved across from him, his promise to Will ran through his mind, *"Promise me that you will never again try to take your own life. Your life belongs to me now, not you…" "I promise, Will…."* He didn't regret making the promise, for he earnestly did not wish to inflict further pain upon Will. It was *for* Will alone that Hannibal still breathed the air of a half-life, *for how can I have a whole life ever again, without Will by my side?* Had it been up to Hannibal, he would have jumped. He would at least be in the afterlife with Will then, not separated by a cruel veil of death.

"Bedelia's gone," Will remarked over dinner. Hannibal flashed him a smirk.

"Your doing, I presume?"

"Naturally. She's fortunate I wasn't particularly inclined to kill her at that moment. Though I daresay that wouldn't be the case should she show up once again."

Hannibal speared a bit of chicken with his fork and looked at it thoughtfully.

"I would have liked to consume her. In sending her away, were you punishing me, too?" Hannibal asked, biting down into the chicken. Will watched Hannibal chew with thinly disguised jealousy.

"Perhaps. Perhaps I don't think she deserves even that honor," Will said, his eyes flint hard and cold as steel. Hannibal tipped his head in interest.

"You are a jealous god, Will. How magnificent you are," Hannibal said fondly, pleased when he saw Will's eyes soften at his words. "Are you really so jealous of Bedelia? Why? Because she came with me to Italy after you rejected me?"

Will closed his eyes, breathing out a sigh of frustration. Hannibal took a sip of his white wine and waited expectantly for Will to continue.

"I didn't reject you, Hannibal," Will said softly, his eyes still closed. Hannibal stilled, placing his wine glass on the table gently.

"You didn't choose me, either. That's as much a betrayal as any," he said, tone clipped. Will opened his eyes, pained.

"I did, though. When I called you, that was me choosing. I wanted you to leave, to be safe. For what it's worth, I spend every day wishing I had left with you the night you asked me to," Will said, his eyes fixed stubbornly elsewhere. Hannibal wasn't sure what to say, not sure that there *was* anything he could say.

Finally, in a soft voice, "I would have liked to show you Florence, Will."

Will looked up at that, a ghostly tear streaming down his face. He wiped at it and gave Hannibal a soft smile, whose heart began to beat faster just from the sight, sweet as honey.

“You still can,” Will said.

Hannibal nodded. He could.

After a few rounds of chess, in which they’d each one a game and the last had been a draw, Hannibal felt himself growing tired. He hadn’t slept in days, not really. Will seemed to notice, and encouraged Hannibal to sleep.

Hannibal stood, looking down at Will sitting in the armchair. Wide blue eyes stared into him, caressed his soul. Hannibal’s heart clenched at the welcome intrusion.

“Stay with me,” he said, voice uncharacteristically soft. Will’s eyes widened fractionally before he stood, nodding.

“Everyday. Forever,” Will said, reassuring Hannibal with the words he’d used earlier. Hannibal gave him a small genuine smile then.

“Come on,” Will said, urging Hannibal towards the bedroom.

Hannibal settled into bed for the first time in days. But as he lay beneath the covers, cocooned in warmth, he still couldn’t slip into sleep because there Will was, standing at the window and gazing out at the night solemnly.

“Lie with me,” Hannibal breathed. He had never needed something so earnestly in his life. Will turned to him, refusal on his lips, but when he saw Hannibal’s face, something in his resolve cracked. Hannibal shifted beneath the covers while Will walked over to the bed and laid down, his body not pressing into the bed at all, hovering just slightly above it. Yet Will looked comfortable, relaxed, for the first time since Hannibal had seen him.

The two men laid next to each other in a comfortable silence. Hannibal fell asleep holding on to the silhouette of Will’s hand.

The next few days passed by remarkably well, considering Hannibal and Will’s unique circumstances. The next day, after waking up next to Will, Hannibal’s mood had improved considerably, and he’d insisted on dragging Will through the streets of Florence, showing him everything from the Piazza Duomo to Ponte Vecchio before they ended the day in the Boboli Gardens.

Hannibal knew he had talked incessantly all day, but Will hadn’t seemed to mind. On the contrary, Will had listened patiently as Hannibal explained his fondness for certain places in Italy, and had asked questions where appropriate. Hannibal was also quite certain he’d caught a fond and indulgent smile on Will’s face throughout most of the day.

Later that night, as Hannibal settled into bed, Will had hovered by the door awkwardly. Hannibal sat up in bed and looked at Will expectantly. Will had blushed a light pink and then climbed into bed next to Hannibal. Hannibal fell asleep shivering, but his mind was quickly beginning to see the chill as comfort because it meant Will was near. Hannibal dreamt he was buried in a grave of snow, Will by his side.

On the second day of their newfound truce, Hannibal had rented a private *barchetta* for he and Will to sail leisurely along the Arno river. Hannibal sat across from Will in the small boat and smiled as he watched Will gaze at the river's coastline in awe. He was confident that the way he openly stared at Will held the same awe that overcame Will's face as he admired the beautiful and ancient city.

That second night, Hannibal awoke with a jerk to find Will peering down at him. A question was on the tip of his tongue but he quickly swallowed it down as Will shushed him gently. And then Will was leaning forward, pressing his lips to Hannibal's and Hannibal froze in shock.

His eyes fluttered closed as he fought against the initial urge to feel unmoored by kissing a ghost. But the thought was soon abandoned as he focused on the sensation of cool pressure against his lips, as if someone were holding ice to his mouth. A tingle spread from his mouth outwards and Hannibal began kissing Will back, trying to latch on to the air thrumming with energy above him. The pressure against him grew firmer- not quite enough to feel like he was kissing Will in a living, breathing human body- but enough to know he was kissing Will, in some form. As if Will's ghostly form was made of cool, flexible water. Hannibal moaned into the kiss.

Will pulled back and looked down at him, eyes hopeful.

"You can feel me, yeah? It feels… good, for you?" Will asked.

Hannibal nodded.

"I can feel your energy, Will, can feel the pressure of you like thick air pressing down on me, cool to the touch. *Mylimasis,* I can *feel* enough of you, kiss me again," Hannibal said, reaching up in an effort to summon the air above him. It didn't work exactly, and Will let out a small laugh.

"I think you're going to have to allow me to handle this side of things, Hannibal. I have to be very intentional and mindful to allow you to feel me, as much as you can. I know you abhor not being in control, but can you do this for me? Surrender to me?" Will asks, looking down at Hannibal with lust in his eyes as he licked his lips.

"God, *yes* , Will, anything for you."

Will smiled at that and moved back to hover a few feet above Hannibal, the sight still discomfiting but exciting nonetheless. Will smirked mischievously at him before sweeping his hand in Hannibal's general direction in a broad stroking motion, causing Hannibal's clothes to be forced from his body. Hannibal laughed softly at his abrupt nakedness, but felt no shame as he spread himself across the bed, keening from the heat he saw in Will's gaze.

Will flowed off the bed and stood to the side, watching Hannibal as he removed his own clothes, which fell to the floor with unnatural slowness, the fabric shimmering slightly as well. Then, Will stood tall, allowing Hannibal to feast upon the sight of him. Hannibal took in the sight of Will hungrily, his eyes tracing the smooth curves and harsh angles of Will's body. He smirked when he caught sight of Will's pretty cock filling out the longer Hannibal paid attention to it. When he finally flicked his gaze back up to Will's eyes, he could feel the palpable tension between them spark like electricity. Will was back on him in a flash.

Hannibal arched into Will's exploration, baring his throat to him as Will peppered cool kisses down the side of his jaw and throat. Hannibal stared at Will in awe as he saw Will completely lose himself to the half-sensation of their joining. Will traced a hand down Hannibal's bare stomach and Hannibal couldn't help the involuntary shiver, though it was for more reasons than the temperature that emanated from Will.

" *Hannibal* ," Will moaned, desire thick in his voice. Will's piercing blue eyes stared down at him, glazed over as he met Hannibal's gaze. Will dipped his head again and Hannibal fought to surrender, commanding his body to let Will have this, have all of him. Hannibal relaxed against the bed and allowed Will to take control, responding to every brush of energy against him. Will nuzzled against his neck as he cast one arm out to the side, twisting his wrist just slightly to summon a current of energy around him that Hannibal felt creep across his chest and tug at his nipples, hardening them immediately. Hannibal felt himself arch into the sensation, a little gasp escaping his lips.

" *Will* ," he whispered, wanting *more* . Will seemed to intuit that, and sank lower down Hannibal's body. The sight of Will's mouth so close to his cock made Hannibal groan lowly, thrusting his hips into the air a couple of times. Will brought his hand to Hannibal's cock and Hannibal couldn't help his natural response to jerk away from the freezing hand, his cock flagging from the harsh change in temperature. Hannibal groaned in frustration and an emotion crossed Will's face, one of deep sadness and hurt and Hannibal immediately pulled back.

"Will, it's okay, we don't have to-" he began, but Will cut him off harshly by sending a rough current of energy his way, knocking him back down to the bed, flat on his back once again.

"Stop talking," Will growled, crouching over him once again. Hannibal swallowed, his cock already pulsing to life once again from the sternness in Will's voice. "The only thing I want to hear come out of your mouth are moans of pleasure and my name," Will added, sitting back on his legs to stroke his own cock as he looked over Hannibal, displayed before him. Hannibal nodded, pleasantly surprised by Will's taking charge, his heart bursting with love as he gazed adoringly up at his beautiful boy.

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Will looked down at Hannibal below him, legs spread, revealing his puckered hole and his thick cock laying heavily against his stomach. Will stroked his own cock, reveling in the

sight before him. Then, a thought occurred to him. He reached out his left hand and began to summon the energy around him once again. He then channeled all of his emotions related to Hannibal- positive and negative- and pushed the energy into his hand. He focused on Hannibal's cock and began to move his hand in stroking motions, willing the energy around him to circle around Hannibal's shaft and apply a pressure pleasing enough to feel as if Will were touching him.

Hannibal jerked, his cock thickening as Will kept up the hand motions, pleased that it had worked. Hannibal's eyelids fluttered closed as the hedonist gave himself over to the sensation completely, little moans escaping his lips. Will smirked, pleased with himself. He then lowered his left hand and Hannibal let out a disgruntled sigh at the loss of pleasure. His eyes flickered open and Will met the intense amber gaze. Will had an even better thought.

Will gripped his own cock tighter with his right hand, while also imagining that the same hand was controlling the energy around him. Like before, he summoned the energy coursing around him and channeled it into his right hand- while keeping up the process of stroking himself. He willed the energy outward, and the force bent to his will, wrapping around Hannibal's cock and applying as firm a pressure that compacted air could, and moved in accordance with the pacing set by Will jerking his own cock.

Once again, Hannibal groaned lowly, indicating that he felt the pressure too. Will smiled, pleased with himself, and ran a thumb over the slit of his head, and Hannibal felt the same, arching into it. Will watched in fascination as a drop of pre-come fell from Hannibal's cock. Everything Will did to his own cock was mirrored by the energy surrounding Hannibal's cock. Hannibal would feel everything Will did.

Taking that as the best they were going to get, Will settled into the bed next to Hannibal and lay on his side, facing Hannibal. Hannibal followed suit, turning so that he too was facing Will. Will inched closer and pressed his forehead against Hannibal's, closing his eyes as he bathed in the knowledge that here they were, naked before each other, vulnerable. Intimate. Showing each other love in the only way they were physically able.

Will began stroking his own cock again, fondling his balls as he did so and watched in fascination as Hannibal responded similarly, his mouth falling open and letting out a low moan when Will cupped his own balls.

"You like that, hmmm?" Will asked softly, ghosting his lips over Hannibal's jaw.

" *Yes* ," Hannibal breathed, his legs falling further open in response to Will applying further pressure to his own balls before trailing a finger further down across his perineum before circling his own entrance. Hannibal flinched in surprise at the sensation as it was reflected by the energy thrumming around his own body.

Will leant forward and kissed Hannibal again, feeling the odd fluctuating barrier between solid, liquid and gas hit him as he leaned too far into Hannibal. He pulled back a little and pressed kisses instead to Hannibal's eyelids, his nose, his forehead. He watched with an aching heart as Hannibal tried desperately to lean into his touch which could never be more than whisper against his skin.

Will pressed a finger into his own hole, moaning softly as he watched Hannibal's face contort in further pleasure at the new sensation.

"That's me, love," Will said, staring into Hannibal's eyes intensely. "That feeling you feel- there, deep inside of you- it's still me doing that. It's me. You can feel *me* ," Will said, desperately trying to tell himself that this was enough.

Hannibal nodded, flexing his hips downward as if trying to sink down on Will's finger, but he only found more air. Will pushed another finger into himself, desperate to make Hannibal feel *full* , satisfied.

He worked his own entrance open and when Hannibal's moans matched the readiness he felt in his own body, he slipped a third finger inside. Hannibal let out a deep moan and bucked his hips back, seeking more. Will thrust into himself harder, and soon their moans matched each other's as the rhythm of Will's pace overtook them.

Will brushed a finger against his own prostate and Hannibal jerked forward.

" *Will!* Right there *mylimasis* ," Hannibal said.

"Look at you, Hannibal, begging to be fucked by the mere thought of fingers alone," Will said, voice rough with lust. "Say please," he added.

Hannibal shot him a glare and Will hooked his finger *just right* and then Hannibal was all but whimpering.

"Please, Will," he said. Will smiled in satisfaction and leant forward to capture Hannibal in another kiss as he thrust against his own prostate repeatedly, the sound of both his and Hannibal's moans filling the air.

Will then withdrew his hand and brought it back to his cock, pumping quickly. Hannibal fisted his hands in the sheet, overwhelmed by the combination of too much sensation and not enough, and Will brought their foreheads together as he stroked them both closer to the edge. Love hung tangibly in the air around them, overwhelming their senses. It was a sweet burn, an all-consuming experience.

"I love you, Hannibal," Will said, the words falling from his lips of their own accord, his heart filling with love even as he said it. Hannibal pressed against Will's not-quite-there forehead and said, softly, "I love you, too, Will."

And then pressure was building deep in Will's stomach, the heat traveling to his groin and he knew Hannibal could feel it too.

"Come for me, Will," Hannibal urged, his eyes locking on Will's. Will saw such overwhelming love and affection in Hannibal's eyes that it sent him over the edge. He and Hannibal came at the same time, Hannibal's come coating his own stomach in thick white stripes and Will's come eerily floating in front of him before disappearing just as quickly. But as they both came, the white light they both saw was not just behind their eyelids.

Instead, an actual bright light shone out into the darkness of the room. Hannibal watched, mesmerized, as Will shone as bright as the sun for just a second, his being nothing more than pure light, before it slowly faded. But as the light around Will faded, they both looked between them in wonder as something remained shining between them.

A thin gold line appeared, almost like yarn, emanating from Will's heart and connecting itself to Hannibal's. They watched as the gold stream between them grew in brightness and then lowered again, pulsing softly. And then a second line appeared, growing out from Will's heart slowly and traveling through the space between them before it anchored itself next to the other rope in Hannibal's heart. They watched for another minute as both golden lines pulsed with otherworldly energy and shone brightly once more before the two lines disappeared altogether.

Neither Hannibal nor Will said anything for a few minutes. They simply watched each other's eyes. Then Will let out a sigh.

"I think that was my tether. *Tethers* , plural, now. I told you I was tethered to you, but I suppose the more tethered I become to you, I literally grow more tethers, further securing me to you, to this world. What we just did is against the laws of nature, was not supposed to happen. Another tether was the cost to be paid."

Hannibal was silent for several minutes, and Will watched his face before he felt tears slowly begin to fall from his eyes.

"Will?" Hannibal asked, concern apparent in his tone.

"Even in death, I could never escape you. I'll never be able to… rest. To move on. I'll always be here, with you," Will said softly.

Hannibal watched him quietly, his eyes darting across Will's face. He opened his mouth to say something, but Will cut him off.

"You never wanted me to have anything in my life that wasn't you," he said, his tone becoming more harsh. "Well, not only was that my life, but apparently it is destined to be my death as well. I hope you're *happy* ," Will said, his throat burning as the tears dropped more profusely now. He scrambled out of bed and ignored Hannibal when he called out for him.

He paused by the door, looking over his shoulder in Hannibal's direction but not at him.

"Goodbye, Hannibal," he said, before walking through the door and disappearing from Hannibal's sight.

Chapter End Notes

as always, thank you for reading, commenting and leaving kudos!! I am (95%) sure that this fic will be 11 chapters, so three to go! It's going to get more rough before it gets

better, so hang in there!! It is worth it, I promise!!

also! I made a playlist inspired by this fic that helped me get into the mood to write/ think about these two and ghost!Will especially. Here's a link to the playlist if you're interested!

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1QUDUI2rrW2y1WogaSjNlY?si=bac9fdbd890f4dad

To Cradle Your Skull In My Hands

Chapter Notes

> I wanted to give a shoutout to alivehawk1701 whose comment inspired some of the events that unfold in this chapter-- thank you very much for the idea!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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One day you'll drink from my bones

And scream as you rip out my throat

Don't let me, don't let me go

- Milk Teeth, song by Keaton Henson

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Hannibal was not accustomed to feeling guilty. Yet, he felt guilt drop deep into his stomach like a stone, weighing him down. Will's quiet 'goodbye' had felt as if the ghost of his beloved had reached straight into his chest and ripped out Hannibal's diseased heart, destroying anything that had remained of the organ in the first place. Hannibal closed his eyes and dropped his head to his hands, combing through his hair idly.

He had felt so… *close* to Will as they brought their bodies together in the only way they could given the restraints between the world of the living and that of the dead. Hannibal would have preferred to call it *making love* but that wasn't really true, was it? *I wasn't even able to touch Will myself… I merely laid there while he pleasured himself and me, vicariously, but I was not able to have him writhing in pleasure under my own fingertips.* Will deserved better, really. Hannibal knew he was a selfish and possessive lover but in the wake of their latest union, Hannibal felt as if he were truly an inadequate lover for Will.

It was true that they had never felt closer to one another than they had in that moment of culmination as they gazed into each others' eyes. In many ways, Hannibal knew their souls were intertwining even more, blurring into something bigger and greater than either of them on their own.

But on the other hand, the sharp isolation that came after their joining had left Hannibal cold and aching, desperate for the feel of Will's skin underneath his hand. He wanted to hold Will, if nothing else.

Yet all Hannibal had done to Will was *take, take, take* . He first took his life, then his love, and now he was taking his death, too. He had laid next to Will in bed and allowed Will to bestow love onto Hannibal even when Hannibal could not do the same in return, and the cost of Will's actions had only tied him to Hannibal more, forever damned to follow Hannibal about the earth like a sullen shadow, a mockery of a life.

It was too much for Hannibal. He had always meant to cherish Will, to *worship* him, not make him a sad shell of a human. Hannibal wrapped his arms around himself as he sat in bed, thinking. He *loved* Will, he really did, and he didn't want to see him suffer, not like this. Making up his mind, Hannibal slid from the bed and dressed before walking out into the living room, expecting to find Will.

But Will was nowhere to be found. Hannibal searched the entire apartment and found no trace of him, though he was still fairly certain he was in the room *somewhere* . He could almost feel Will's gaze on him, could feel Will's energy hovering in the room. It seemed as if Will had decided to hide himself from Hannibal's sight, intent on punishing him.

"Will," Hannibal said into the room quietly, "I do hope you know I love you, darling. But it pains me to see you miserable in this way, unable to even feel my love for you returned. You showed me your heart last night, Will, and though I cannot show you mine in return in the way we would both like, I will always do everything in my power to prove the depths of my affection for you," Hannibal said.

No response came and Will still did not reveal himself, though that was hardly surprising. Hannibal sat down at his desk and drafted a letter before signing it and tucking it into his suit jacket. He left the apartment without another word.

The *palazzo capponi* was relatively quiet today, but as Hannibal entered the workspace reserved for faculty, he was pleased to find Professor Sogliato bent over an exhibition on the far side of the room. Hannibal wasted no time and walked up to the man, pulling the letter out of his suit jacket and handing it to him. Professor Sogliato raised his eyebrows but unfolded the letter nonetheless, scanning the contents before raising his eyes to meet Hannibal's once again. The professor nodded slowly and Hannibal gave him a polite smile before turning again and headed back the way he came.

He stopped at his own desk, distracted by the call of the papers he had been working on. He sat down and began flipping through his various projects for some time before he began to feel someone's gaze fixed on him. He looked up to find a man leaning against the wall by the doors, arms crossed as he stared at Hannibal. Hannibal raised an eyebrow in question and the man sauntered over, puffing out his chest.

"Dr. Fell," the man greeted in a thick Italian accent, extending his hand, "Rinaldo Pazzi." Hannibal took the offered hand and shook it politely, recognizing the man immediately from decades ago from when Hannibal used to haunt this place under a different name.

"You must be a Pazzi of *the* Pazzi," Hannibal commented, thinking of the ancient Italian family. Pazzi nodded absently, filling him in on the details of his relations. Then, he turned to

Hannibal with a sharp gaze.

“The questura recently found a body in Palermo,” he began, “in a most disturbing state. The victim has been identified as Anthony Dimmond, English national. If I am not mistaken, this man used to be your TA at Cambridge, yes?” Pazzi asked. Hannibal looked the man over, assessing how much of a threat he was. In the end, he decided ‘ *not much* .’

“Ah, yes, Mr. Dimmond. A bright young man,” Hannibal said, before pulling a face of false contrition. “I’m saddened to hear of his passing, in such a horrific way, too. He was quite a good student.”

Pazzi looked Hannibal over again, eyes narrowed. Hannibal gazed back at him politely.

“You don’t happen to know anything of his, ah, disappearance, do you?” Pazzi asked, leaning closer. *So obvious. You are showing all of your cards, dear Pazzi.*

“I am afraid I do not,” Hannibal said. “I had not known Mr. Dimmond was in Palermo at all, in fact.”

“Right, well,” Pazzi said, slipping Hannibal his business card, “if you happen to remember anything, you can reach me at this number.”

Hannibal took the card and pocketed it. *You really make this too easy* . He walked Pazzi to the exit and bid him a good day, not missing the way the inspector’s eyes flashed in recognition as he looked over Hannibal’s face. Hannibal couldn’t summon the slightest effort to be concerned.

After a few more hours of work, Hannibal returned back to the quiet Florentine apartment, devoid now not only of Bedelia’s presence, but Will’s as well. Hannibal attempted to shove down the overwhelming wave of loneliness that washed over him as he retreated to the kitchen, preparing the altar for the upcoming sacrificial slaughter.

Later that evening, a knock came at Hannibal’s door and he walked to open it, revealing Sogliato on the other side. Hannibal flashed a pleased smile and stood back to welcome Sogliato inside.

Sogliato entered the apartment, gazing around in curiosity. He made his way to the living room before he turned to look at Hannibal, who was standing just behind him. Sogliato cocked an eyebrow, unease slipping into his voice.

“I thought Mrs. Fell would also be attendance…” he said slowly, gazing about the empty room. Hannibal gave him a wicked smile and guided him toward the kitchen.

“Oh, I said my *partner* would be in attendance, it is your own fault you assumed who that was. But, as it stands, my partner is currently otherwise occupied, preferring to keep to himself at the moment. However, I feel I must be candid with you; this whole evening is entirely for his benefit. You are merely an offering,” Hannibal said.

Sogilatio whipped around to look at Hannibal, but Hannibal was quicker. He brought the ice pick from his pocket and drove it through Sogliato's temple, watching with faint amusement as Sogliato babbled incoherently before slumping to the ground, dead. *Time to get to work* .

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Will watched Hannibal work with growing concern. He knew Hannibal to be a calm and meticulous butcher, but this appeared to be anything but. Though Hannibal had begun as normal, as he progressed through his design he became more clearly distraught. Will moved closer to watch Hannibal, shocked to see the deep anguish buried in Hannibal's eyes and etched into the lines on his face. Hannibal's hands shook as he brought a knife down harshly to Sogliato's chest, cutting a deep line that left his chest gaping.

Then, with a twisted expression and eyes shining with tears, Hannibal plunged his bare hand into Sogliato's chest, ripping out his heart, blood seeping into the kitchen counter which he laid upon as if he were on an altar.

Will felt his own heart clench as he saw the way Hannibal's shoulders tensed as he pushed Sogliato to the ground, letting the body thump heavily on the floor. Will could practically feel the grief and sorrow emanating from Hannibal as he worked, arranging Sogliato into a kneeling position in front of the kitchen counter coated in his blood. He brought Sogliato's hands forward and tied him in front of the man, raised upwards as if in supplication. He then put the heart in the outstretched hands.

Hannibal turned back to the kitchen counter-turned-altar and began placing candles upon it, lighting each of them slowly. Will watched as the flames flickered to life, casting shadows across Hannibal's face that surely reflected the internal pain the man felt.

When he finished lighting the candles, Hannibal slumped to the kitchen floor, his eyes brimming with tears as he looked over his own design.

Will took in Hannibal's design and the significance of the tableau made his heart ache bittersweetly. Hannibal had built an altar to Will and had provided a sacrifice; he had created a stand-in for himself in the form of Sogliato and had cut out his own heart, offering it to Will in supplication.

Hannibal had offered Will his broken heart once before. Now, he was offering Will his heart once again. Hannibal's voice echoed in his head. *'Would you let this killer's love go to waste?'*

Will sank down to the floor too, sitting invisibly across from Hannibal. He felt his own face soften as he watched the tears flow silently down Hannibal's face. Hannibal's bloodied hands lay in his lap, and Will couldn't help but see those red-stained hands as the hands of his lover who continued to fight for him, everyday.

The thought sparked guilt inside of Will. He remembered the way Hannibal's soft voice had called out to him in the dark, pleading with Will to stay with him. Will had promised *'Everyday. Forever'* back to Hannibal and here he was now, withholding his own form from Hannibal in some form of payback for circumstances beyond either of their control. It had been less than a week since Hannibal had stood upon that ledge, driven to it by his own heartbreak, and Will had already broken his promise to Hannibal that he would stay. Had forgiven him and loved him only to withdraw once again.

Part of Will felt as if Hannibal deserved it still, deserved to suffer. But a bigger, more pure part of Will longed to see Hannibal arch in pleasure from the ghost of his touch again and to feel Will's presence wrapped around him like a thick blanket of love and protection. Will was just as powerless against Hannibal as Hannibal was against him.

With that thought, Will exhaled slowly and revealed himself once again, feeling his energy shimmer around him briefly as he shifted back into Hannibal's view. Across from him, Hannibal's head snapped up and Will's breath caught in his throat at the raw hope in Hannibal's face and the relief he saw in his eyes.

"Will," Hannibal breathed, his person suit completely dissolved as he revealed his authentic face to Will. Will doubted it was even a voluntary choice. Hannibal had sacrificed all of himself to Will, after all. There would hardly be any hiding now.

"I apologize, Will, I-" began Hannibal, but Will brought up a hand to cut him off.

"No. I want to apologize, Hannibal," Will said, and Hannibal's eyebrows raised in shock. "You asked me to stay with you, and I promised I would, always. But I left you in a vulnerable position after we shared something so intimate, thinking only of myself and my own fears and anger. It was not fair to you. I really am sorry, love," Will said, the term of endearment slipping from his lips as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

Hannibal was speechless for several moments, blinking rapidly as he tried to process all of what Will had just said to him. When he did respond, what he said took Will by complete surprise.

"Do you want to move on, Will? Like Mischa, that is. Do you want to find your place of rest, at last?"

Will couldn't breathe. Whatever he had expected, it certainly wasn't that. He just stared in shock at Hannibal for several minutes, unsure of what to say.

"Surely you must know by now the tether keeping me tied to this earth goes two ways… Your inability to let me go, and my inability to let you go, *that* is what prevents me from moving on. You… You would let me go? You would do that? For me?" Will said, disbelief dominating his tone. Hannibal simply looked at him, his eyes minutely scanning every corner of Will's face.

" *Yes* . I would try, I would do anything in my power, *mylimasis* . I do not wish you to suffer in this way. It is not fair for me to take the power of your love, to feel the whisper of your touch on my skin and find pleasure in it, when I cannot do the same for you. I fear it will

drive us both mad," Hannibal said, liquid sorrow dripping from his lips. Will swallowed harshly, thinking it over.

"I don't think I *can* move on, Hannibal. More than anything because *I* do not want to. I could not stand to be separated from you. Your soul begins where mine ends; we are conjoined. I know you would try to let me go, Hannibal, but we both know neither of us would succeed in letting the other go. It simply is not in our nature, and our love does not allow for such things," Will said, knowing in his heart that it was true. While their love was undoubtedly powerful, otherworldly, and ineffable, it was also not something that could be classified as 'pure.'

Their love *was* selfish. Possessive. All-consuming. Demanding. Dominating. It left no room for mercy; it was not kind. It was a dark and dangerous thing and they were both utterly destroyed and rebuilt by it simultaneously. Will knew this, and Hannibal knew this, too.

Hannibal's brow furrowed in concern at first but the resiliency in Will's voice and his certainty had Hannibal nodding by the end of his statement. They both knew Will would not be able to move on, and that Hannibal did not truly want him too, either. The tethers would be unbreakable.

"And for the record," Will said, "I do not mind the way things must be when we make love, Hannibal. You have no idea how long I have wanted to watch you lose control in front of me, and I will cherish that in my own way. Please do not concern yourself with the difficulties and impossibilities of our union. Just focus on the pleasure that we *can* share. It will have to be enough. Promise me, please."

Hannibal gazed at Will and did not say anything for several long moments. Just when Will was sure he wouldn't get an answer at all, Hannibal spoke.

"I promise, Will. But I shall strive to give you everything of which I *am* capable, my darling boy," Hannibal said, a small smile playing across his lips.

Relief soared in Will's chest and he crawled across the empty space between them before situating himself over Hannibal's lap. He dipped his head down to capture Hannibal's lips in a searing kiss, feeling the buzz of the barrier between them and the responding lukewarm presence of Hannibal's life-force underneath his. *It would have to be enough* . He covered Hannibal's face in affectionate kisses before he withdrew, beckoning Hannibal to the bedroom.

An hour and two new tethers later, Will laid his head on the pillow underneath him and smiled at Hannibal. Hannibal looked so blissfully fucked out, and Will couldn't help the waves of energy he kept sending Hannibal's way, just enough to tease his cock, making Hannibal moan in overstimulation.

Hannibal settled into the sheets, gazing back at Will contentedly.

“I would burn the world for you, Will,” he said softly. Will smiled back, genuinely warmed at the thought.

“And I’d let you,” Will responded, planting a sweet kiss to Hannibal’s forehead before Hannibal drifted into sleep and Will spent the rest of the night watching over his lover with renewed fondness.

The next day, Hannibal insisted on displaying Sogliato in public, telling Will he wanted it to not only be a public declaration of his love for Will, but also a way to poke at Pazzi, the new investigator somewhat on Hannibal's trail. Will had rolled his eyes, believing his motivation to be much less of the former and more of the latter, but had agreed nonetheless, quietly reveling in the opportunity to see *Il Mostro* stalk his old hunting grounds once again.

Will had accompanied Hannibal later that night to the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore and he *may* have aided Hannibal in breaking in with a few ghostly tricks of his own. This time, Hannibal placed Sogliato with his sacrificial heart kneeling in front of the actual altar in the center of the church. The heresy didn’t necessarily bother Will, he really couldn’t be bothered either way, but it was Hannibal’s particular joy in the heresy that had Will laughing by the end of the night.

Will told Hannibal when they got back to the apartment that Hannibal would be lucky if the tableau didn’t garner international attention and lead the FBI straight to him.

Will had expected Hannibal to dismiss the concern, but what he got instead was silence. That’s when Will took another look at him, trying to meet Hannibal’s eyes, but found that Hannibal was averting his gaze. *Oh shit.*

“You’re drawing them to you, aren’t you? All of them?” Will asked, his tone suddenly hard. Hannibal slowly put down his fork and folded his hands in his lap, leveling Will with an even stare.

“And if I am?”

Will just stared back at Hannibal, his jaw gaping slightly. *Was this man out of his mind?*

Hannibal just returned to eating and Will let the subject drop, his mind still uneasy but unsure of what exactly he should or even could say.

Later that night, as Will made love to Hannibal again, watching the way Hannibal desperately chased the feeling of the air swarming around him, Will could no longer ignore the heartache raging in his chest with renewed resilience. The inability to actually touch Hannibal was driving him mad and when he instinctively reached out to grasp Hannibal’s jaw in his hand, he snarled in anger when his hand slipped through Hannibal’s face.

Hannibal jerked back from the sensation, shivering from the ice-like invasion of his senses. It was the dismayed expression on Hannibal’s face that broke Will’s heart and when the new tether grew as they both climaxed, Will couldn’t help but feel as if the tethers were both a

blessing and a curse. Yes, he got to see Hannibal again, had the chance to *love* him, but he also was doomed to a Death of torture, what he really wanted with Hannibal always being *just* out of reach.

They didn't speak afterwards. They didn't need to. They both knew they wouldn't be able to stop, even if this half-life was destined to drive them both insane with grief and riddled with obsessive want for something they could never have. Everything came at a cost, after all. For Hannibal, Will would always pay the price, no matter how high.

Will watched as Hannibal sank into an uneasy sleep. Clearly, the events of tonight's almost-union were disturbing him as well, though Will knew that Hannibal would always pursue him, regardless of any warnings about not upsetting the balance of the universe. To Hannibal, Will *was* the universe, and the only thing that could possibly matter. Will watched over Hannibal in his sleep, idly wondering if he would be forced to watch Hannibal lose his mind over their situation. The process may even take years, but worry began to settle in his chest as he thought about the way Hannibal would forget to live, forever chasing someone who was already dead.

Will's thoughts were suddenly interrupted at 3am. Will sat up straight in the bed, a chill settled deep in his bones. He felt as if darkness was blooming from his core and seeping across his being like ink spilling on parchment. Something was *wrong* . Horribly, terrifyingly *wrong* .

Hannibal must have sensed Will's distress because soon he was sitting up in bed too, trying to call out to Will, who was too disturbed to hear him at first.

"Will? Will? *Will* ," came Hannibal's voice, finally reaching Will at last. Will turned to look at Hannibal and for once couldn't help the shiver taking over his own body, despite the fact he had not shivered once since his death. "Are you alright?"

"I… I, uh-" Will stammered, "I don't know how to describe what I'm feeling besides that one expression… like I feel 'someone just walked over my grave?' I really don't feel so well…" Will said, the sense of foreboding growing in his mind.

Hannibal did not look worried, but Will knew him well enough to see that the faint crease between his eyebrows meant he was quite worried as well.

Hannibal stayed up the rest of the night with Will, neither of them saying anything, the knowledge that the other was close being enough to help them make it to the morning.

Two days later, Hannibal and Will came face to face with what had provoked the deeply unsettling and ominous feeling in Will's core. The realization came attached to Bedelia and Freddie Lounds.

It was late in the evening, and Will and Hannibal were sitting by the fire. Hannibal was sipping wine and Will was regaling him with stories of his college days when a steady knock sounded at the door. Hannibal paused, curious, and Will gave him a shrug. Hannibal set down his glass and walked to the door, opening it to reveal the two women on the other side. Will knew immediately *this* had been the cause of his concern and a dark shadow seemed to hover over the two women, causing Will to feel the eerie feeling in his chest once again. Hannibal stepped aside to let them inside.

Neither Bedelia nor Freddie looked at Will as they walked into the sitting room, confirming Will's suspicion that they were not able to see him. Only Hannibal was. Hannibal glanced over at Will and Will pointed at the two of them, mouthing to Hannibal that it was *them* that had facilitated this darkness. Will had no idea what they'd done, but he knew it *absolutely* was no good.

Freddie and Bedelia sat next to each other on the couch Hannibal led them to, and Freddie set down a rather large bag she'd been carrying at her feet. Hannibal sat down in an armchair across from them and looked at them politely but expectantly.

"I thought you had fled the country, Bedelia," Hannibal began genially, crossing his legs.

"No, I simply found that it was the time to… *extract* myself from whatever predicament I had landed myself in," she said, flashing him a thin and cold smile. Hannibal's eyes narrowed and flickered over to Freddie.

"Ms. Lounds. I certainly did not expect to see you here. What brings the two of you to Florence?" he asked. Freddie gave him a simpering smile.

"Oh, the Chesapeake Ripper, of course," Freddie said, bravely glaring at Hannibal. Will had the sudden suspicion she was filming or recording this, likely hoping to goad Hannibal into revealing his crimes. "And Will Graham," she added, smiling triumphantly as if she had solved world hunger.

Yet the admission brought a fresh wave of concern to Will and he glanced over at Hannibal, knowing Hannibal would be able to read his anxiety. Hannibal's eyes softened ever so slightly and Will relaxed just a little bit, knowing Hannibal would do anything to protect him if he came to that.

"I'm afraid I do not know what you're talking about," Hannibal started, raising a placating hand. "It seems your extensive career in tabloid journaling has led to a reduced state of your mental faculties," he said.

Freddie's eyes flashed in anger.

"You can insult me all you want, but I have something you need. If you're going to keep playing this little game of yours, perhaps I'll just have to play my own little game," Freddie said. Bedelia smirked. Freddie raised her eyebrow at Bedelia, who nodded back at her. Freddie grabbed hold of the bag at her feet and slid it to the middle of the floor. Hannibal looked at it in curiosity and Will felt his hair begin to stand on end.

“I would take a look inside if I were you, Hannibal,” Bedelia said, the smile not leaving her face. Hannibal stared back at her, clearly thinking of ways to kill her, but he finally moved, kneeling on the ground beside the bag.

He unzipped the bag and pulled the sides apart. What Will saw inside made his stomach drop in horror.

Inside the bag were Will’s bones, sitting in a pile, covered in salt. What Will had felt two nights earlier was the two women digging up his grave. Hannibal froze as well, eyes fixed on what was in the bag. Slowly, he raised his eyes to look up at the two women.

“What is this?” he growled, rage already flaming in his eyes. Freddie leisurely pulled out a delicate matchbox, pulling out a match and striking it, causing a tiny flame to appear.

“I throw this in that bag, and Will’s bones burn. Setting salted bones on fire will force Will from this world. Don’t know where it will send him, don’t particularly care. But your beloved ghost will be gone, Hannibal.”

Horror rose in Will’s lungs and settled underneath his chin; panic began to take over his body and he looked to Hannibal, his eyes surely betraying how terrified he was. He didn’t want to leave Hannibal. Not at *all* , actually, not even if it meant moving on. He *couldn’t leave* Hannibal.

Hannibal bared his teeth in a snarl as he looked up at Freddie, rage shining in his maroon eyes. She held the burning match out further, less than a short toss away from the bag of bones.

“You make one move towards us and your *murder husband* is over,” Freddie said, her voice shaking only slightly as she held her ground. Bedelia was smirking and the sight of her arrogance jolted Will into action, pulling him out of his shock in order to save himself and Hannibal.

Summoning all of the hate he held towards Bedelia, and pulling on the abundant emotion he felt towards Hannibal, Will gathered a wave of energy behind his hands before he sent it in Bedelia’s direction, twisting his wrist at just the right moment to cause the energy to swirl around her and snap her neck. She fell to the ground, dead. Will thrummed with the high of the kill and turned his eyes to Freddie. He felt his figure flicker and then he was briefly television static before he was pieced together again, knowing that Freddie could see him now, too.

She stared at him in disbelief, as if she really hadn’t thought Will was a ghost and had simply been humouring Bedelia, perhaps just taking advantage of the opportunity to fuck with Hannibal’s head. Whatever it was, they never got the chance to find out because Hannibal pounced on Freddie in her moment of shock at seeing Will and tackled her to the floor, ripping the matches out of her hand and throwing them far across the room. The match she had lit lay on the ground, extinguished now.

Hannibal pinned Freddie to the ground and she screamed as she tried to claw at him. He looked down at her and Will watched with growing excitement and wonder as he saw the

protective fury in Hannibal's eyes.

"You dare threaten what's *mine* , Ms. Lounds? Foolish girl," he practically spat, sliding his hands to her neck, wrapping them tightly around her throat like a necklace. She kicked at him, panicked, as she fought to breathe. Hannibal simply grit his teeth and stared down at her in disgust as she breathed her last and then slumped against the floor, dead.

Hannibal pulled back from her, panting from the effort and high of the kill. He looked up at Will, searched his eyes, and Will felt such an overwhelming surge of love and affection for Hannibal that it brought him to his knees beside the man.

"I could have lost you," Hannibal said quietly. Will brought his lips forward to meet Hannibal's, planting kisses along his face in gratitude and relief.

"But you didn't," Will said, pulling back to cup Hannibal's jaw lightly and stare into the amber eyes, still wild from the fear of almost losing what he loved most.

"No. You stayed with me," Hannibal said, a fond smile appearing on his lips. Will kissed him again, nuzzling his cheek to Hannibal's.

"Everyday. Forever," Will responded, sighing into the protective force of Hannibal's energy buzzing in the air around him.

After Hannibal had removed select organs from both of the women, he stored the bodies in the deep freezer he had in a hidden pantry, saving his newly acquired raw materials for his next tableau for tomorrow.

After Hannibal pulled Will's bones out of the offending bag of salt, he neatly arranged them in an antique chest he had sitting in his study. Will stood by Hannibal's side as he did so, no longer feeling the deep unease of someone touching his remains. It seemed even Will's bones trusted Hannibal.

Yet when it came to just Will's skull remaining in the bag, Hannibal's eyes seemed to glass over. Hannibal reached inside the bag and gingerly lifted Will's skull, but then his hands stilled as he cradled Will's skull in his hands. Tears began to stream down his face and when Will knelt down next to Hannibal, Hannibal jerked away from him, not even realizing it was Will next to him. He was in his own world, most likely lost in his memory palace. He held Will's skull close to his chest possessively, protectively. Sobs wracked his body and Will felt tears stream down his own face as he watched Hannibal's raw grief. He had never seen Hannibal so visibly unhinged, completely checked out from reality. Hannibal was muttering out loud in Lithuanian and Will couldn't understand a word of what he said, aside from frequent use of the word *'mylimasis.'*

"Hannibal," Will said softly. It took a while to rouse Hannibal from his reverie, to summon him back to reality, and when Hannibal's eyes finally met Will's, Hannibal's eyes were full of confusion. It was Will's turn to comfort Hannibal.

“Shhhh, hey love, it’s okay, I’m here,” Will said, resting his hand gently over Hannibal’s. Hannibal seemed to respond to the chill, blinking down at the almost-contact on his hand. He raised his eyes to meet Will’s and Will gazed back calmly, pleased as he saw the confusion begin to melt from Hannibal’s gaze. Will kept muttering sweet nothings in his ear until Hannibal returned from whatever horrors he had visited in his memory palace. When Hannibal finally spoke, his voice was rough with emotion.

“I dream of a grave, deep and narrow, where we could clasp each other in our arms as with clamps, and I would hide my face in you and you would hide your face in me, and nobody would ever see us any more*,” he said.

Will’s eyes widened in shock, the admission stunning and robbing him of breath momentarily. He knew Hannibal’s love for him ran deep but this… this was something else entirely. How fitting that would be, for their bones to lie in the earth together, disintegrating together as they became one with the earth and one with each other at last. To spend Death together, and wherever that may take them.

“Oh, my love, I know. I know.”

Chapter End Notes

thank you for reading!!

next week (hopefully) I will be posting the last two chapters together-- they are meant to be read together so you can have the bittersweet/happy ending as soon as possible lol.

*this quote about the grave is from Franz Kafka, it is not mine. shoutout to my dear friend Rowan for always finding the best hannigram-esque poetry & literature out there.

also: salting & burning the bones is very much a Supernatural fandom idea, so thanks to the time I spent watching that show as well!

anyway, thank you all for commenting & reading & leaving kudos; I'll see you next week for the conclusion to the story!

What a Heavenly Way to Die

Chapter Notes

the final two chapters are here!! they are intended to be read together, so just keep that in mind :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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What a heavenly way to die

What a time to be alive

Because forever is in your eyes

But forever ain't half the time

I wanna spend with you

- What a Heavenly Way to Die, song by Troye Sivan

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Hannibal did not sleep that night. Instead, he remained stubbornly awake, insistent upon keeping Will within his view at all times. Will had tried several times to lull Hannibal into sleep but after a few hours, he gave up.

Hannibal was currently lying on his back, hands clasped together over his stomach as he roamed the splendid walls of his memory place. He could distinctly feel Will still lying next to him on the bed, undoubtedly watching him with concern in his eyes, but Hannibal continued to ignore him. Tonight he was in Jack's old office, meeting Will for the first time.

Hannibal watched himself watch Will in that memory, catching the way his own lips had parted and his eyes had widened when Will had first turned to address him directly. Looking upon the memory years later, he was confident it had been love at first sight for him. Hannibal longed to shake his memory-self; he yearned to reach out and tell his more naive self that he should embrace his feelings for Will as love. He tried hard not to think about the

way that the Memory-Hannibal would eventually have to pay the ultimate price of his beloved's death just to realize he had been in love with that same man the whole time.

With a sigh, Hannibal closed the door to that Memory's room, and started through the halls of his mind once again. He paid a brief visit to the night he and Will had dined on Randall Tier's flesh together, his heart warming at the way he saw Will glancing at him from that night. The love he felt for Will surpassed the feelings of betrayal and anger still associated with this night, when Will had lied and said the meat had been Freddie's. How petty the irritation seemed now that Will was dead; Hannibal would feed Will the meat off his own body if it meant bringing him back to life once again.

Hannibal shut the door to that memory as well and began the trek back to the foyer of his memory palace. He resolutely avoided the sleek black door that rattled at the end of a dark hallway he passed, knowing it housed the memory of Will's last night alive. That door, and the door that stood in the middle of a Lithuanian forest, were places Hannibal could not safely go.

Hannibal dismissed the thoughts as he walked into the foyer of his mind; the beauty of the Norman Chapel never failed to astonish him. He closed his eyes as he allowed the bright light of the room to wash over him, simply enjoying the moment of peace. He did not wish to open his eyes again for he knew that when he did, he would be met with the sad and cold sight of Will's ghost once again.

Yet before long, Hannibal could feel the shape of the foyer around him fading into nothing, the feel of silk sheets and chilling air becoming more present in his mind by the minute. Soon enough, Hannibal blinked open his eyes and he was back in bed next to his darling Will. Hannibal gazed at him out of the corner of his eye and found Will to be watching him intently.

"Will," he said, "you have clearly been wishing to say something to me for the better part of the night but have refrained from doing so; please tell me what troubles you so."

Will cocked his head to the side and was silent for a few more moments before he finally did as Hannibal had asked.

"A few hours ago… you told me you dreamed of a grave, one where we could lie together, hidden from the world," Will said before falling silent again.

"Yes, I do recall," Hannibal said after some time, not sure where exactly Will was heading.

"Right, well, er, I'm not exactly sure how to ask this, but… that is, I hope you know it's only out of love that I… well, no, not *only* out of love, but also-" Will rambled on, wringing his hands together slightly.

"Will," Hannibal said sharply, effectively quieting him. He rolled onto his side to give Will his full attention. "Just ask me."

Will nodded and swallowed harshly. "Right. Well, um. Are you *alright* , Hannibal?"

Oh.

Hannibal licked his lips and did not answer Will for several minutes.

“No,” he said quietly. “Are you?”

Will looked at him, his eyes pools of sadness. Hannibal desperately wished he could reach out and kiss those beautiful eyelids. He wished he could reach out and break Will to pieces underneath him only to build him together again, extracting moans of pleasure from Will’s chest the entire time. Hannibal would burn every last soul on the earth if it meant he got to feel Will’s skin on his own again, if he could feel Will’s lips underneath his own. Hannibal knew he would never be able to stop pursuing Will. Not in life, not in death. Icarus, forever chasing after the Sun.

“No,” Will finally answered, casting his gaze away from Hannibal’s. “I can feel your distress, Hannibal. I am afraid you will lose yourself to hopeless longing for me, and forget to live.”

“What is Life without you beside me, my dearest Will?”

Will groaned, flopping onto his back and staring at the ceiling instead.

“That’s *precisely* what I mean, Hannibal. You have a *whole life* ahead of you. You could live several more *decades* . It cannot all revolve around me,” Will said.

Hannibal felt his lips twist in amusement.

“Will, your perpetual desire to be Good, while noble, is a *lie* , my dear. You know it as well as I; quit your posturing and look at me for a moment.”

Will frowned but nonetheless turned to Hannibal, cool blue eyes burning into Hannibal’s soul.

“Will, you are just as much a *selfish* creature as I am. You have told me on multiple occasions that you feel as if I do not want you to have anything in your life, or death, that is not me. I freely admit what you say about me is true. I do not want you to have anything *except for me* ,” Hannibal said, possessiveness dripping like blood from his words. Something flashed in Will’s eyes and Hannibal caught onto it like a predator reaching its prey.

“And *that* , what you just felt, Will… *that* is the same desire that burns within you. *You* , my remarkable boy, do not want *me* to have anything in life that is not *you* . Why else would you haunt me so, and become tethered to me so irrevocably?”

Will stared at Hannibal, his expression at first indignant but it slowly morphed into reluctant recognition and then Will was smiling softly.

“You’re right,” he said quietly.

“I know,” Hannibal said, smirking slightly. Will smiled more broadly at that and shook his head fondly. Hannibal sobered up quickly and fixed Will with another intense gaze. Will met it with equal intensity, having felt the shift in Hannibal’s mood.

“I would have you haunt me for the rest of my life, Will. Inject yourself into my mind and overwhelm my senses; drive me mad with hopeless longing, feed off of all that is my soul. Walk with me to my own grave and then retire with me there,” Hannibal said, the breathlessness in his voice betraying the depth of his emotion. Yet Hannibal did not mind; he truly had sacrificed his heart to Will.

Will’s expression, with his parted lips and hopeful eyes, was more than enough for Hannibal. He did not need Will to say anything, preferring the speechlessness that had washed over him instead. Hannibal leant forward and pressed his lips to Will’s, welcoming the now-familiar chill and malleability of Will’s ghostly form. Will’s eyelids fluttered shut and he moaned into the kiss, sparking Hannibal’s hunger once again.

Will soon laid over Hannibal and peppered him with kisses, divesting him of his clothing until they were both bare before one another. This time, Will was torturously slow and meticulous, and Hannibal had never been so systematically dismantled in his entire life. Their gasps mingled in the air as they showered each other with unending love, devotion, and desperation. They came simultaneously with twin groans, another golden tether growing between them.

Will glanced down at the now intricate web of golden tethers laid out between them. Hannibal watched Will nervously as he ran a hand over the fine golden lines, worried that Will was going to be upset again by just how much they were tied together. What Will did say made Hannibal’s heart stutter under the weight of the love that arose within him at the soft words.

“It’s beautiful.”

It was time for *Il Mostro* to strike again. Florence had been on lockdown for the past week, ever since *la polizia* had found Sogliato’s corpse displayed before the altar in the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore. Murmurs of *Il Mostro* being active again after twenty years were already circulating through the fine Italian streets and Hannibal could hardly hide how pleased he was.

Sogliato had marked the second of his Italian sounder, a collection dedicated to his beloved Will. Anthony had come first, then Sogliato, and Hannibal found it fitting that he would finish this particular series with a third tableau. This third tableau would be a little different this time, however, considering he now had *two* bodies to work with instead of the usual one.

Hannibal drummed his fingers idly on the countertop as he mentally ran through the plans for his tableau. Freddie and Bedelia’s eyes stared blankly at him and he couldn’t help the smirk that came across his face as he stared back into their empty faces. As far as he was concerned, they’d be given mercifully quick deaths compared to what he had really wanted to do to them in retaliation for their attempts at harming Will.

When night fell, Hannibal folded the two bodies into the little cart he had prepared, already full with the rest of the items he would need for the tableau. Will had followed him to the

door as he began to leave and Hannibal had turned back to him, telling Will he wanted Will to wait to see it. He wanted it to be a *surprise* .

So, half an hour later, Hannibal had successfully snuck into the Uffizi Gallery and was now standing in its grand foyer, meticulously cleaning a wide space on the floor where he would soon place his art. Once the area was pristinely white, Hannibal began to work.

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Hannibal returned to the apartment after two hours, hauling in the now-empty cart and all of his remaining materials. Will glanced up at him from where he sat by the window and offered a small smile. Hannibal gave him one as back and Will pulled himself from his seat, walking over to Hannibal.

Hannibal busied himself with returning all of his tools to their assigned places and then he turned to Will, a question in his eyes. Will nodded and allowed Hannibal to lead the way.

Will wasn't quite sure what to expect. Will was pretty certain that the tableau would be another monument to him and the thought alone already had his heart warming in his chest.

Hannibal stopped at the Uffizi Gallery and ushered Will inside. When Will walked forward into the foyer, he paused as Hannibal reached to turn on one of the lights. The illuminated scene before him made Will's breath catch in his throat.

There, in the center of the foyer, demanding everyone's attention, was Hannibal's love for Will, painted on a canvas of broken bodies. As Will looked over the scene, he knew immediately the story that it told. It told the tale of Icarus, a man who was in love with the Sun but had flown too close, burning his wings in the process. The tableau depicted Icarus' fall.

Freddie's body had become one with the Sun. Laid in the top left corner of the display, Freddie's pale body was gently wrapped in red and orange silk and her flaming red hair fanned out from her like a crown. Shattered pieces of yellow, orange, and red glass formed concentric circles around Freddie like a halo. Together, with the glass, Freddie was a mosaic of the Sun.

Situated some length below Freddie on the floor was Bedelia, turned upside down so that her head was pointed in the opposite direction of Freddie, giving the illusion that she was falling from the sky. Bedelia's golden hair was laid out around her and she wore a simple white dress. Her arms were stretched out on her sides, lying atop broad wings that seemed to sprout from her back. The wings were made of hundreds of individual wax feathers, each unique in shape. The wax feathers closest to the edges of the wings appeared to be melted, congealed together. Bedelia was Icarus in his Fall. The overall effect of the tableau brought to mind Blondel's 1819 mural, *The Sun or the Fall of Icarus* , and Will took note of Hannibal's allusion to the masterpiece that had preceded him.

Will smiled, his heart constricting as he thought about all of the emotion and meaning Hannibal had poured into this tableau. In it, Hannibal was acknowledging firstly that he saw Will as the Sun, the center of his life and the source of his endless fascination. Secondly, Hannibal was casting himself as Icarus, acknowledging the role his own hubris had played in Will's death and their current situation. Lastly, Will realized Hannibal was aware of what he had already known; Hannibal was Falling. He had flown too close to the Sun, and was now paying for it. Will idly wondered in which Sea Hannibal would metaphorically drown.

Hannibal was gazing at Will, no doubt awaiting his feedback. Will turned to Hannibal and gave him a soft smile.

"I must admit, seeing you cast yourself as the star of a cautionary tale is not something I would have thought I'd ever see," Will said, smirking slightly. "Your pride typically lends itself to associations with the heroes of other Greek epics."

"Most Greek epics are also tragedies. Achilles lost his Patroclus, and Oedipus had his downfall. Icarus is not so different. In fact, I find it quite fitting that my pursuit of you, *mylimasis* , played upon my own hubris. The association is quite apt," Hannibal said.

Will hummed softly before stalking closer to Hannibal and placing a kiss upon Hannibal's lips, desperately pleading with whatever god that may be out there that Hannibal could feel the depth of emotion raging with him. Will's heart twisted with dull grief as he mourned his own inability to deepen the kiss and surrender to the feeling of Hannibal overwhelming his senses. With an irritated huff, Will realized how fitting it was that their future would be full of Hannibal being overwhelmed by Will, seeing how in Will's life, the exact opposite had been true. Will hadn't thought he'd be pleading to once again feel the loss of control he'd always felt beneath Hannibal's fingertips.

Hannibal sighed into the kiss, relieved with Will's approval of the tableau. Will knew it was important to Hannibal that he see Hannibal's genuine regret over what he'd done, and the role his own hubris had played. While it certainly did not change anything, Will was grateful nonetheless. Two years ago, he'd never have thought a man who was also the Chesapeake Ripper would be capable of freely admitting his own tragic flaws.

"Let's get you home, hmm?" Will asked, settling his arm around Hannibal's waist and nodding towards the exit. Hannibal eyed him cautiously, still hesitant to accept Will taking on a more protective and nurturing role in their relationship. But Will just rolled his eyes and then Hannibal was smiling at him indulgently, leading them out of the Gallery.

Hannibal's *Icarus and the Man Who Was the Sun* tableau had Italy in a full-blown panic. Hannibal and Will watched with amusement from the window of their Florentine apartment as *la polizia* roamed the streets below them enforcing strict curfews. Hannibal seemed delighted with the chaos he'd caused and Will couldn't help but laugh alongside him, rewarding his *monster man* every night- and often several times throughout the day- as if he were determined to have thousands of tethers formed by the end of the week.

A world away, Jack Crawford opened an email from a *Rinaldo Pazzi* and dropped his cup of coffee in horror.

***

“ *Goddammit,* ” Jack growled, longing to punch the computer screen in front of him. He huffed as he picked up the phone on his desk and barked out orders into it for Jimmy and Z to come to his office immediately. He threw the phone back down and paced restlessly across the office before the two knuckleheads walked in a few moments later, a mixture of terror and confusion on their faces.

“ *Sit* ,” Jack snapped, gesticulating wildly. Z and Jimmy immediately slid into the chairs across from Jack’s desk, jaws still gaping.

“Brian started it!” Jimmy blurted, pointing a finger accusingly at Z. Z’s mouth dropped open in exaggerated offense and began to protest before Jack interrupted them.

“Enough. I don’t give a damn who started or didn’t start whatever the hell you’re talking about. I called you here for other reasons,” Jack said. He sat back down at his desk and printed the photos from his computer before sliding them across the table to Jack and Z. An uncomfortable stretch of silence ensued.

“Is that-”

“Oh, Jack-”

“I don’t know,” Jack said, shaking his head. “I don’t know if it’s him, not for sure. But it sure as hell looks like his work, and I’m pretty sure that’s Freddie Lounds and Bedelia Du Maruier in the last photograph. Look, I’m going to have Alana consult later, but if this is him, and I’m almost positive it is, we’re going to be packing up for a trip to Italy. Understood?” Jack said.

Z and Jimmy nodded, murmuring about needing to find someone to watch their (Will’s) dogs while they were gone.

“You may go, for now. Take the file with you, and start looking into the details of what it would take to contort a body into a shape like that first one,” Jack stated, passing them the file and then waving them out. The two men walked out, arguing in hushed tones as Jack turned back to the computer and sighed.

It was definitely Hannibal’s type of work. The three tableaus were symbolic, bloody, and situated not only as art itself, but were displayed within aesthetically pleasing backgrounds like the Norman Chapel and the Uffizi Gallery. There was hardly a chance it was anyone else. But to be sure, Jack dialed Alana’s number and waited impatiently for her to answer.

***

“Hello?” Alana said, her brows furrowed in confusion at the call from Jack. He didn’t really call much these days, hadn’t talked to her since the hospital, in fact.

“Dr. Bloom. Look, I know this is probably the last thing you want to do right now, but I need your help. I need you to consult on a case,” Jack said. Alana refrained from rolling her eyes, but only just.

“Jack, I’m not really-”

“Alana. I think it’s him. I need your opinion to be sure,” Jack interrupted. Alana fell silent then, her eyes widening as she turned to look at Margot, who sat a few feet away from her on their couch, her eyebrows raised in question. *It’s Jack* , she mouthed at Margot, who immediately sat up in interest and gestured for Alana to keep talking.

“Er, okay, yeah, I can do that. Can you meet us at the Verger Estate? Margot and I have information that may prove… useful. I’m confident we can come to an agreement. And bring Frederick, would you? I have a feeling he’ll want to be involved in this conversation,” Alana said, smiling thinly. Jack agreed and hung up abruptly, promising her he’d be around later that afternoon. Alana set down her phone and turned to Margot, who was watching her expectantly.

“Jack thinks he’s found Hannibal,” Alana stated flatly. Margot smirked.

“Did he say Hannibal was in Italy?”

“No, he didn’t mention any details. But he and Frederick will be by later this afternoon. I guess I can’t hide from them any longer, anyway,” Alana said, running her hand protectively over her stomach, which had developed a slight bulge. Not quite enough to be noticeable, but enough for Alana to know she was quite pregnant indeed.

“Don’t you think it… *unwise* , inviting the FBI into our home, considering we killed my brother in this very room a mere two months ago?” Margot said, panic seeping into her voice despite her determinedness not to show it. Alana shrugged.

“Everyone already knew Mason was partially paralyzed and that he was prone to coughing fits. It’s really not a far stretch to imagine he suffocated one night in his sleep. Relax, love. Mason’s dead and buried, and his death was ruled natural by the coroners. We’re *fine* , Margot. We got what we wanted out of him,” Alana said, gesturing vaguely to her stomach, “and now he’s gone. No more to it than that,” she finished.

Margot looked nervous for a few more minutes and then nodded tightly, content to let it go.

***

Jack slammed the door behind him as he hopped out of his Bureau-issued vehicle, Frederick trailing in his wake, a little slower due to his cane. As the farm came into view, he suppressed a slight shiver, finding something vaguely unnerving about the place. He raised his hand to knock on the door but before his fist could connect with the wood, Margot stood in the doorway, beckoning them inside.

The four of them settled down at a large dining table already laden with fine china cups filled with coffee. Jack took a scalding sip and then pushed the file into the middle of the table, flipping it open without fanfare.

Margot glanced upon the photographs of the crime scenes dispassionately, expression unreadable. Alana narrowed her eyes and leaned forward for a closer look as Frederick gagged in the back of his throat and averted his eyes from the scene.

“Oh, it’s him alright,” Frederick stated, shaking his head. “It practically screams his vanity! He mocks the sacred by placing two of his tableaus in the middle of the most holy sites in Italy! It reeks of his arrogance; why, it’s quantifiably bitchy!”

Jack pinned Frederick with a glare.

“Thank you, Dr. Chilton,” he said curtly before turning to seek Alana’s opinion.

She ran her hand over the photographs, clearly deep in thought. She finally raised her eyes to meet Jack’s, her blue eyes wide with regret.

“I’m pretty sure this is Hannibal, Jack. The obvious being the third tableau- it’s no secret he despised Lounds’ rudeness, and I’m pretty sure that’s Dr. Du Maurier, his former psychiatrist. Furthermore, not only am I aware of his affections for Italy, Margot and I have further evidence that can confirm he is in Italy,” she said with a sigh. Jack frowned.

“Evidence? What the hell are you talking about?” he asked gruffly.

“Well,” began Margot, “Dr. Lecter has repeatedly threatened Alana’s life, and by extension, mine. Not to mention our child’s life,” she said, glancing pointedly at Alana’s stomach. Jack looked surprised but then gave them a small sincere smile.

“Congratulations, I truly am happy for you two, I hope you know that,” Jack said, before his face fell back into a frown. “And that makes it even more understandable why you want him found just as much as I do; you have your family’s safety to worry about, I get that. And I’ve got promises to keep, promises I can keep by making sure Hannibal Lecter stays off the street. And I’m sure Dr. Chilton is quite interested in housing him at the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, isn’t that right, Dr. Chilton?” Jack asked, swiveling to look at Frederick.

“Oh, naturally. I’ve already been working with Alana and Margot to achieve that very end,” Frederick said with a self-satisfied smile.

“Well. It seems we are all agreed on a common objective, then. We need to catch Hannibal and lock him up for good, for all of our sakes and to our mutual benefit,” Jack said.

“Yes, I would say we are all agreed. But Jack, what do you mean you’ve made promises? To whom-”

“Bella. And Will. The time I spent in the hospital with Bella, after Hannibal stabbed me, she told me something I haven’t been able to forget. She told me ‘you can cut out what’s killing you.’ I know she meant the job more generally, but it applies to Hannibal even more. Not to mention I swore to Will, after he died,” Jack said, trying to play off the way he choked up as nothing more than a cough, “that I would bring Hannibal down if it was the last thing I ever did. And I intend to keep those promises to two people who were very important to me.”

No one said anything after Jack’s impromptu sentimentality, but each individual at the table completely empathized with it. Alana cleared her throat.

“As I mentioned earlier, Frederick, Margot, and I have been trying to track down Hannibal for months. And just a few days ago, before news of the last of the three tableaus reached America, we found evidence that indicated he was in Florence. We found reports detailing that a blonde woman had been making the same exact purchase from a small vendor every Friday for several months now, wine and truffles. And when our team cross-referenced security footage from the area, we identified this blonde woman as Bedelia Du Maurier, Hannibal’s former psychiatrist.

“Even more interesting is that Bedelia seemed more than willing to be caught. She often sat at the train station longer than needed, setting her purchases down beside her, the label with the store’s name clearly facing the security cameras. She made eye contact with the cameras several times. Seems Dr. Du Maurier had found herself deep within the lion’s den and was quite anxious to get out at last,” Alana said. “Too bad she ended up with Freddie in his last tableau.”

Jack blew out a breath as he looked over the receipts Alana had provided, as well as the photographs of Bedelia in Florence, confirming it was indeed her in the latest tableau with Freddie. *This is it, then* .

“Looks like we’re going to Florence. What we’re doing isn’t exactly… *legal* , but I do have a contact with Italian law enforcement who has already expressed his earnestness to work outside the law on this one. Now’s the time to take that bastard down. Anyone down for that can come. We leave tomorrow evening.”

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Hannibal poured himself another glass of wine as he listened to Will talk about his dogs, and how much he missed them. Hannibal smiled softly as Will spoke repeatedly of Winston, and how his dogs had been able to see and sense him after he’d died, and how that had meant the

world to Will. Hannibal cocked his head to the side, studying the grey sadness that clung to Will's undead frame, still present despite every effort Hannibal had made.

"Perhaps we could adopt a few dogs, when we finally leave this place. Would you like that, Will?" Hannibal asked, settling back into his seat. Will looked up at him with a bright smile and the grey in his frame seemed to flicker for a moment when exposed to Will's joy.

"Do you mean it? Could we really?" Will asked excitedly, looking at Hannibal as if he had hung the moon.

"Of course, *mylimasis* . Anything for you, Will. You know that."

Will smiled back and opened his mouth to respond but whatever it was he was about to say, Hannibal would never find out. The door had burst open and suddenly the room was full, body after body piling in, and a line of people had guns trained on Hannibal from across the room. Will jumped back in shock but Hannibal placed his glass down on the table next to him calmly. He had been expecting this. Waiting for it, in fact.

Hannibal turned minutely in his chair to come face-to-face with Jack Crawford sneering down at him. Fanned out behind him were Rinaldo Pazzi, Alana, Margot, Price, Zeller, and Frederick. Hannibal's smile widened into something bordering on genuine.

"I see that all of you have received your invitations to my dinner table," Hannibal said, leveling each of them with an intense gaze. "I am so pleased you could all make it, though I daresay an R.S.V.P. would have been in order."

"Shut the hell up, you sick bastard," said Price, his face twisted into a determined grimace even as the gun he pointed at Hannibal wavered in his shaking hands. Hannibal smirked. He really hadn't seen that coming from Price.

"That's *enough* ," said Jack before fixing Hannibal with a stern glare. "Game's over, Lecter. You're coming back with us. Dr. Chilton is going to take good care of you."

Hannibal pulled himself from his chair, smiling to himself as he watched all of them jerk their guns in response. He held his palms up, non threateningly, as he took a step closer, leveling his gaze on Chilton.

"Fate has a habit of not letting us choose our own endings, Frederick. Lucky for you, it seems Fate has listened to your choice to die today, and I am more than happy to fulfill the role as executioner," Hannibal said, taking pleasure in the way Frederick's mouth dropped open in horror.

" *Lecter,"* growled Jack, "the odds are stacked far against you on this one. We've all got guns trained on you. You're not getting out of here alive unless you choose to *come with us* . We all know how much you think it is a pity to waste a life; surely you don't want to waste yours in such a way?"

Hannibal stilled, breathing calmly as he looked at Jack. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see Will preparing to strike and he met his gaze, shaking his head minutely. He didn't want

Will to get involved in this. He wanted to finish this on his own.

Hannibal looked at Will again, his luscious curls glowing in his ethereal beauty, and Hannibal *yearned* to reach out for him. *Maybe I could just… let them kill me…* To be reunited with Will in Death was too tempting a thought.

Hannibal didn't spare another minute for consideration, intent on making good on his plan to join Will in Death. He lunged for Jack, tackling the man to the ground and disarming him quickly. They struggled before Hannibal slammed Jack's head on the ground, hard enough to render him momentarily unconscious.

Hannibal took advantage of the moment to leap up and start towards Alana, intent on fulfilling his promise to take her life. She shot at him but missed horribly; she wasn't properly trained, after all. Bullets continued to fly at him from all throughout the room but each one seemed to avoid him, and Hannibal cursed his luck. For once, he just wanted to *die* and he couldn't even manage to do that.

Hannibal grabbed a knife from the dinner table next to him and leapt for Alana, knocking her gun to the ground and drawing her into his arms. He held her faced away from him, her back pressed to his chest, and held the knife to her throat. He could hear Will yelling at him vaguely in the distance but the adrenaline was too *loud* , coursing through his veins with such a noise that demanded his attention.

Hannibal snarled at the people across from him, all of whom were now lowering their guns, desperate for Hannibal to spare Alana's life. Hannibal could feel Alana whimpering in his arms and her throat was *right there* and his hand longed to bring that knife slashing through her neck. He almost did so, and then Will's voice, crying out his name sternly from across the room, brought him to a halt.

Hannibal paused and looked up at Will, who was shaking his head at him. Hannibal tried to tell Will with his eyes *just let me die, let me join you* and Will seemed to know what Hannibal wanted, but shook his head nonetheless.

"Stop, Hannibal. Just stop. I know what you want, and I know you want it *desperately* , but I am begging you: live for *me* . I don't want you to die, Hannibal, I want you to live the rest of your natural life for the beautiful gift that it is. Please, Hannibal. *Please* do this for me. Put the knife down," Will said, tears falling from his pristine blue eyes. Agony was painted on his face and Hannibal felt his own heart break.

The hand holding the knife to Alana's throat shook as Hannibal fought against himself. He *longed* for that grave, to retire with his dear Will, but Will's insistent pleas pulled upon every fiber of Hannibal's being, commanding him to obey. He was powerless against his beautiful boy, and though it would hurt to surrender and live out his life from the confines of a cell in Chilton's hospital, if that's what Will wanted, Hannibal would do it. He would do *anything* for his Will.

Hannibal could feel the room grow silent and time seemed to slow.

He vaguely recognized Jack talking to him, having regained consciousness, but Hannibal could only see the beauty of his beloved staring at him from across the room, gazing into his eyes intently. Hannibal gave a minute nod of his head, telling Will *okay, fine, I surrender* , *I'll live out my life, because you ask it of me* and he saw the relief in Will's eyes as he began to lower the knife from Alana's neck.

Hannibal did not have enough time to register the firing of Jack's gun.

He did not process the sight of the bullet speeding towards him, nor did he feel the pain of the bullet lodging between his eyes and tearing through his skull.

In the seconds before his death, Hannibal only knew the cerulean-tinged promise of forever in Will's eyes before he was, at last, engulfed by a blinding white light.

Chapter End Notes

DON'T HATE ME !!!

Keep reading-- it gets better I PROMISE!!

All Greeks Did Die

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

****

Never regret thy fall, O Icarus of the fearless flight

For the greatest tragedy of them all

Is never to feel the burning light.

- Oscar Wilde

****

Will let out a raw scream of horror and grief as he watched Hannibal's body fall to the ground. Jack had shot him right between the eyes, even as Hannibal had clearly begun to lower his weapon in surrender.

He was going to surrender, he was surrendering, was all Will could think and he collapsed to the ground as sobs began to tear through his body. He crawled across the floor to kneel over Hannibal's body and let out another wail as he saw the blood trailing from the wound on Hannibal's forehead and the empty look in Hannibal's eyes.

Will tried reaching out to Hannibal's body uselessly, feeling for his life-force, but felt his heart break when he couldn't find it. He ran his hands wildly through his hair, his grief so profound he thought he would die again if it were possible.

Across the room, Alana was collapsing into the arms of Margot and Jack was staring silently down at Hannibal's body, his face eerily devoid of emotion. Pazzi stepped forward and fixed Jack with a frown but said nothing as he wrenched the gun from Jack's grasp. Frederick took a step forward and opened and shut his mouth a few times, considering.

Finally, "You shot him even though he was lowering the knife. He was surrendering, Jack, and you knew it."

Jack blinked slowly and turned to fix Frederick with a glare.

“I had to cut out what was killing me, killing all of us. For Bella. For Will.”

Will’s mind went blank as he heard his own name mentioned. Had he not been so numb with shock, he might have descended upon Jack to kill him.

Instead, he simply laid down next to Hannibal’s body, his mind still rubbed too raw with grief to do much else. He laid beside his lover and felt tears fall from his eyes. Before too long, he began to feel something else stir within him.

He looked down at his chest, watching with awe as hundreds of golden tethers began to sprout from his heart and reach across to Hannibal’s heart. Upon reaching their destination, the golden tethers shone brightly, and then Will was aware of his own body shining as bright as the sun, and then he too succumbed to a great and blinding white light.

Will blinked his eyes rapidly against the white light as it slowly began to fade from his vision. In its wake, a structure began to appear, and Will squinted as he saw large marble archways and a golden ceiling dance before his eyes. He blinked again and then the walls of the Norman Chapel slid into being. Another blink and then Will’s breath was catching in his throat as the entirety of the chapel stood visible before him.

A warm, heavenly light filtered through the windows along the church and the flickering flames from the red votive candles gave the chapel the feeling of *home* . The intricately arranged mosaic sprawled across the floor directed Will’s eyes toward the front of the chapel, where a skull, graven in stone, awaited him. But as Will followed his gaze to the *memento mori* , a sight much more precious awaited him.

Standing below the golden frescoed ceilings was the silhouette of a man, outlined in a ring of white light, clad in a bespoke suit. Will’s heart soared as he felt the life-force of his beloved rear its head.

Hannibal was waiting for him at the altar.

Will took a tentative step forward, and then another, and soon Will was walking up behind Hannibal, who stood unmoving. Will gazed at him curiously, mesmerized by the quiet contentment he saw on Hannibal’s relaxed face as he stood facing the light with his eyes closed. Will was suddenly aware he could feel his own heart beating again- he hadn’t felt it in over a year- and he ran a hand over his chest in wonder.

The heartbeat seemed to increase in both pace and volume as Hannibal slowly turned to him. Maroon eyes met blue and Will felt love pour out of him, abundant and unyielding.

“Hannibal,” Will whispered, his voice stumbling over the emotion that sat lodged deep in his throat.

“Will, *mylimasis* ,” Hannibal said back softly, his eyes wide and vulnerable and brimming with unshed tears.

Will raised a hand and held it out towards Hannibal hesitantly, unsure if he would be able to feel him. Hannibal watched quietly as Will's hand approached him and then came to a rest upon his shoulder. Solidly. Concretely. Will had *touched* Hannibal.

Will's brows furrowed at the onslaught of emotion building within him and looked down at his hand, scared to believe it was true. But then Hannibal was *there* and he was *so warm* and *oh god, I can feel him-*

Heart cracking with relief, Will pulled Hannibal roughly against him, crushing him in a hug. And there, against his chest, he could feel Hannibal's heartbeat, warm and strong. Will clung to Hannibal desperately, unable to control his own elated and erratic breathing. Hannibal was hardly any better off; for all of his composure, his breath was similarly scattered and his nails dug into Will's back with exquisite pain.

"I thought I'd lost you," Will said, his voice cracking with grief. Hannibal pulled back and looked down at Will, eyes unbearably soft. He raised a hand and cupped Will's jaw, his thumb slowly tracing circles in Will's skin. Will closed his eyes at the feel of Hannibal's warm skin on his own and before he knew it, tears were falling from his own eyes.

"I… I can *feel* you, Hannibal… you're so *warm* ," Will said, his breath coming in gasps again, overwhelmed. Hannibal pulled him to his chest and tucked Will's head under his chin, running a hand over his back soothingly.

"I know, *mylimasis* , I know…" Hannibal said softly before turning to nuzzle his cheek against Will's forehead, inhaling his scent from his hair. Hannibal's hands traveled up his back and snaked around his neck before they were both digging into Will's curls, pulling them taught with barely restrained desperation. Hannibal pulled back to look down at Will's eyes before his gaze flickered over Will's lips. Will licked his bottom lip nervously as he stared intensely back at Hannibal in a silent plea. Hannibal traced a thumb over Will's soft lips.

"May I?" he asked, voice rough. Will's breath caught but he nodded and then Hannibal's lips were on his, moving unbearably gently at first and then at Will's insistence, the kiss deepened and turned more rough. Will bit into Hannibal's bottom lip and he felt pleasure course through him at the moan that escaped Hannibal's lips. Will pulled back and stared mesmerized at the blood dripping from Hannibal's lips from where his teeth had bitten in.

Will reached out and touched the blood curiously, bringing a red-stained finger to his lips before slipping it into his mouth, sucking on the blood while gazing into Hannibal's bloodstained eyes. The warm metallic taste bloomed across Will's tongue and then Will was pinned in place by the heat in Hannibal's gaze. Will ran a hand over Hannibal's suit-clad chest idly, feeling the heartbeat under his hand.

"Are we… alive?" Will asked, looking about curiously. Hannibal gave him a sad smile.

"I don't think so, beloved."

"Then where are we? Why can I feel you- your warm skin, your blood, your heartbeat?"

Hannibal glanced around the chapel serenely, his face contemplative.

Then, “I think we must have moved… *on* .”

Will nodded slowly.

“With nothing tying either of us to the land of the living anymore, we have ‘gone on,’ as you say. Where is everyone else, then?”

Hannibal frowned, looking about the quiet chapel with curiosity. Will wrapped his hand firmly in Hannibal’s and then led them to the doors of the chapel, pushing open the heavy wooden doors.

White light blinded their vision momentarily as they stepped from the church. When their eyes adjusted to the sight of quiet and pristinely clean Italian streets devoid of any signs of life, Will turned back to look at Hannibal.

“There is no one else… It’s just us, Hannibal. Why is it just us?”

Hannibal looked thoughtful for a moment and then smiled softly.

“I once told you that Achilles wished that all Greeks would die so that he and Patroclus could conquer Troy alone. I believe this is Troy, Will,” Hannibal said, gesturing to the warm Italian streets, “and that we are destined to conquer it. Alone.”

Will looked up at that, eyes warily hopeful.

“So all Greeks *did* die… It’s just you and me now. Everyday.”

“Forever,” Hannibal added, lips quirking in a smile. Will found the sight incredibly endearing and he folded himself back into Hannibal’s arms, still amazed at the fact he could now feel the physical security of Hannibal’s arms around him. Will leaned up and spoke softly into Hannibal’s ear.

“Take me to bed, Hannibal,” he said, planting a searing kiss to Hannibal’s lips before pulling away to look at him. Hannibal’s eyes were blazing with something akin to hunger and then Hannibal was snaking an arm firmly around his waist and guiding him from the city square.

Hannibal guided Will through the streets of Palermo before he came to a stop at a small villa on the edge of the Tyrrhenian Sea. It was not the same house Hannibal had stayed in when he’d traveled to Palermo to display Anthony Dimmond’s body, though it was undeniably Hannibal’s style. Hannibal led him through the front door and Will looked about the living room and kitchen and study, the art and books confirming it surely belonged to Hannibal in both another world as well as this one.

“You didn’t stay here when you were last in Palermo,” Will said. Hannibal stilled, not turning to look at Will.

“No,” he said finally.

“Why not?”

Hannibal did turn to look at him then, amber eyes calculating. But as he stared at Will, the edge in his look seemed to vanish, as if he had finally realized that Will was his for eternity, and surely wouldn’t be going anywhere.

“I bought this villa the night you showed up with Randall Tier’s body. I do quite enjoy Florence, but Palermo is where the constructions of my mind palace began. I wanted to show you the Norman Chapel, Will, when I was ready for you to see all of me. Hence why I chose that place to offer you my broken heart,” Hannibal said, crossing the room to open the back window that looked out on the pristine blue water of the marina nearby.

“I entertained many thoughts of eventually asking for your hand in marriage there, above the sign of the skull that tied us together” Hannibal admitted quietly, gaze still resolutely fixed on the water. “And I intended this to be our home. I thought you would enjoy sailing on the sea in our backyard.”

And *oh god, that hurt* . Will’s heart twisted at the thought of all he had lost in life but even as he felt the pain settle in his chest, his heart beat steadily through it all, and Will was forced to realize just how much he had *gained* in his death. He took a few steps towards Hannibal and came to a rest behind him. He wrapped his arms around Hannibal’s waist and planted his forehead on the back of Hannibal’s neck, kissing lightly there.

“This is our home, now. I know we didn’t end up here according to your plans, Hannibal, but we still ended up here,” Will said, planting more insistent kisses along Hannibal’s neck. Hannibal tilted his head to the side, exposing more of his neck to Will’s hungry and searching lips.

Hannibal let out a soft moan as Will sank his teeth gently into his neck and Will rocked his hips against Hannibal’s firm ass until he stopped abruptly, realizing Hannibal was shedding silent tears with his eyes closed.

“Hey, what’s wrong, my love?” Will asked, turning Hannibal in his arms to face him directly. Hannibal kept his eyes stubbornly shut and Will ran a soothing hand along his jaw, waiting patiently. When Hannibal finally opened his eyes, his eyes betrayed how broken and vulnerable he felt.

“I don’t deserve this,” Hannibal said softly, tightening his grip on Will’s hip. “I meant what I said, Will, when I acknowledged how I was Icarus, and how my own hubris and arrogance left us both scorched as I pursued you so recklessly. I accepted that my Fall was coming; I was content to die knowing I had done everything in my life to show you how much I loved you. I did not anticipate an afterlife so glorious, so… *beautiful* . And I surely did not imagine I would be able to share it with you, forever. I am not worthy of it, or of you, Will.”

Will listened to Hannibal quietly, the part of him still harboring anger agreeing with Hannibal, while the part that loved Hannibal, which was really his whole self, longed to tell Hannibal that it did not matter.

“Perhaps the Sun loved Icarus, too,” Will said at last, his thumb still tracing the same pattern over Hannibal’s jaw. “I always called you towards me, Hannibal, desperate to feel the touch of your wings even if I was the one who scorched them in the process. You are the only one who has ever seen the light of my soul, the only one who ever pursued its glow so adamantly. Perhaps our love was too much for Life, but it clearly is not too much for Death. I *love* you, Hannibal. And I know you love me the same.”

Hannibal was silent for several moments, his eyes softly vulnerable as he traced the lines on Will’s face, finding only confidence there.

“I know what you were willing to do for me, Hannibal,” said Will. “I know what I asked of you. I know you wanted to die when Jack had you surrounded; I know you wanted to join me in Death because you knew you would lose your mind if you lived out your life loving a ghost. And yet I still asked it of you; like the Sun in its love demanding everything from Icarus, I did the same to you by asking you to live. And then I *saw* you, Hannibal. I saw you lowering your knife, relegating yourself to a cursed half-life of despair. I saw you do that. For me. Simply because… because I wanted you to.”

Hannibal closed his eyes and a grimace formed on his face. Will leant forward to kiss the wrinkle out of his lips.

“You gave me all,” Will said simply. Hannibal opened his eyes at that and nodded slowly, curling into the curve of Will’s hand on his cheek. Will smiled softly.

“I do not want to spend eternity thinking back on a Life where we both did not belong,” Will said. “Do not say such things to me again, I cannot bear it. Love me instead. I need you, Hannibal. *Please* ,” Will said, his heart fluttering as he looked deep into the maroon eyes, seemingly reflecting the glowing of the Sun. Hannibal seemed to internally battle himself for a few more moments before at last he sighed and let out a small smile.

“Of course, my dearest Will,” Hannibal said, stepping closer to envelop Will in his arms. “You are *everything* . And you are *mine* , always,” Hannibal added, possessiveness creeping into his voice. The sound went straight to Will’s cock and he let out a shaky breath before his hands were desperately running up and down Hannibal’s chest, relishing the firm, thick feel of Hannibal below him.

“You’re so warm, Hannibal,” Will gasped as Hannibal slid his hands down to cup Will’s ass, the fingers curled over his cheeks tightly in another move that suggested possessiveness. “I was so *cold* , for so long, Hannibal, and you… *fuck, you feel so good* ,” Will moaned as Hannibal tightened his grip and began to plant searing kisses to Will’s neck, biting into the flesh there.

“It was torture, not being able to touch you like this,” Hannibal rasped as he began to unbutton Will’s shirt and tease one of his nipples while his other hand kept kneading the flesh of Will’s ass. “I longed to see you writhe beneath me, show you how much you *belong* to me, how much I adore you, *mylimasis* .”

“Please, Hannibal, show me,” Will said, digging his nails into Hannibal’s back as Hannibal bent down to take one of Will’s nipples between his teeth and sucked on it, causing Will to let

out a strangled cry. After so long of only weak and torturously ineffective ghostly sex, each sensation Hannibal left on Will's body practically *burned* . Each caress caused a tingle to bloom on his skin and Will's senses felt so overwhelmed he could hardly think.

Hannibal grunted against his neck but didn't say anything, taking his time to explore every inch of Will's skin. He slid Will's shirt from his body and reached up to unbutton his own suit, laying it to the side without concern. His chest now bare, Hannibal pulled Will to him and held him tightly to his own chest, both of them savoring the warmth and heavenly feel of skin on skin that they had been denied during all of their previous forays into intimacy. In many ways, this felt like their real first time.

Will felt like he could cry from the warm glide of Hannibal's chest against his own. He fisted a hand into the silvery chest hair and gave a sharp tug, releasing an all but primal growl from Hannibal's throat as he stared at Will, heat etched into the rims of his eyes. But Will could tell he was still holding back and he began to claw at his chest with more earnestness.

"Hannibal," he pleaded, " *please* . I need you to show me I'm yours, I want you to possess me… make me *yours* ," Will said.

It was all the convincing Hannibal needed to hear.

With a rough grunt of acknowledgement, Hannibal hoisted Will into the air, both hands firmly grasping his ass as he moved them both back towards the bedroom. Will wrapped his legs around Hannibal tightly and refused to let his lips leave Hannibal's, consuming them as would a starved man.

When Hannibal came to a stop at the foot of the bed, he put Will down and quickly yanked Will's pants down, exposing his already hard and leaking cock. Hannibal took in the sight hungrily, unable to wait another moment as he pushed Will back onto the bed roughly and crawled over him before swallowing him whole. Will keened and arched up into the sensation, his eyes rolling into the back of his head. Hannibal's hands shot up and he pinned Will's hips to the bed tightly, holding him in place as he continued to suck eagerly and expertly at Will's cock.

He slipped one hand away from one of Will's hips and snuck it down to fondle Will's balls and Will couldn't help the deep moan that left him then. Hannibal then moved his hand and began to circle a finger teasingly along Will's rim as his tongue shifted around his length. Will buried his hands in Hannibal's hair, keeping his mouth on his cock, completely lost to the sensation he'd been *craving* . He didn't hear the pop of a cap opening and didn't hear the sound of lube being squirted onto one of Hannibal's hands and then *oh fuck* Hannibal was pushing a finger into him and Will let out an involuntary moan, pitched higher than he ever would have admitted.

Hannibal smirked in response and continued to bob his head on Will's cock, circling his tongue up the shaft before suckling on the head, pulling pre-come from Will. Will fisted his hands in the sheets and in Hannibal's hair and he *writhed* beneath Hannibal, just as Hannibal had wanted.

“What a beautiful boy you are, Will,” Hannibal said against Will’s throat as he moved up his body to plant kisses against his neck. One of his hands remained on Will’s cock and then began to venture lower before slipping back into Will, fingering him until a second finger could be added. Hannibal swallowed Will’s moans and began scissoring him open. Will savored the steady warmth of Hannibal above him and ran his hands over the broad shoulders, occasionally sinking his nails in when Hannibal twisted his fingers just so.

By the time Hannibal was adding a third finger, Will was whimpering.

“God, *please* , Hannibal,” Will bit out, grounding his ass down desperately onto Hannibal’s fingers.

“You beg so prettily, you wicked thing,” Hannibal said fondly. Will opened his eyes and looked at Hannibal’s above his, amber glowing gold in the light.

“I need you,” Will whispered, cradling Hannibal’s head in his hands. A soft and vulnerable emotion passed over Hannibal’s face and then he was nodding, undressing the rest of the way and then moving to situate himself between Will’s legs. He gripped his thighs and then sank forward, slowly making room for himself in Will’s body.

There was a slight burn but it soon turned to pleasure as Hannibal began to rock his hips into Will. Hannibal leant over Will and clasped each of Will’s hands with one of his, intertwining their fingers together so that every possible inch of his body would be touching Will.

Will arched up into Hannibal’s chest and Hannibal buried his face in Will’s neck, marking his neck with increasingly harsher and more possessive bites. Soon, Will was slamming himself down on Hannibal’s cock to match his thrusts, desperate for more.

Hannibal growled and leaned more bodily over him, snarling in pleasure as he pounded into Will, his balls slapping against the skin of Will’s ass lewdly. The sound of their mutually growing pleasure rang throughout the room and Will held on to Hannibal’s hands desperately.

“You’re so good for me, *mylimasis* ,” Hannibal panted into Will’s ear and Will moaned loudly, relishing the praise falling from Hannibal’s lips. He began to feel a familiar heat rise in his belly and he groaned in frustration as he grabbed his cock by the base and squeezed hard, staving off his orgasm.

“Don’t wanna come yet,” Will ground out at Hannibal’s gaze. Then, “but want you to come inside me, Hannibal.”

Hannibal lost it after that. He pinned Will down and fucked him relentlessly into the mattress. He nuzzled Will’s neck and Will tilted it to the side to give Hannibal more access and then Hannibal bit into it sharply, causing Will to cry out in shock and pain and then with a few final thrusts he was coming deep inside of Will.

Hannibal finally loosened his teeth from Will’s neck and then was pulling out of Will, stopping to momentarily push his come back into Will’s ass, pleased with the sight of his

domination. As he flopped down onto the bed next to Will, he noticed Will was still gripping the base of his dick and looking very determined and he raised an eyebrow in question.

“I wanna come inside you,” Will said in response. Hannibal’s eyes widened and *fuck* Will loved the look of shock and pleasure on Hannibal’s face.

“Let me take care of you, love,” Will said, flipping Hannibal onto his side so that he could pull Hannibal’s back to his chest. Hannibal, already loosened from orgasm, spread his legs more than willingly as Will’s hand drifted down to find the puckered hole between Hannibal’s cheeks. With lube-coated fingers, Will began to circle his entrance and then was pushing in slowly but insistently, kissing Hannibal’s shoulders as he did so.

Soon, Hannibal was taking three of Will’s fingers and Will could no longer stand the anticipation. He gripped Hannibal’s hip and entered him from behind, burying his head in the back of Hannibal’s neck as he groaned in pleasure.

For Will, it was less about possession this time than it was about showing Hannibal how much he treasured him. He had shown Hannibal countless times he possessed him when he’d made love to Hannibal while he was in his ghostly form but this time was different. Just as Will had had the need to feel Hannibal’s hands possessing him in a way he hadn’t been able to do while Will was a ghost, Will knew Hannibal needed to feel loved and cared for in a way Will hadn’t yet been able to provide.

Will wound an arm tightly around Hannibal’s chest and pressed his own chest against Hannibal’s back while he fucked into him slowly from the side, savoring the way warmth radiated from Hannibal into his very *soul* . He pressed kisses constantly to Hannibal’s shoulders and back and then Hannibal was twisting his head, seeking Will’s lips.

Will held Hannibal close to him and kissed him breathless as his hips rocked faster. Hannibal arched beautifully in his arms and Will knew he was in heaven when he saw the look of pure pleasure splashed across Hannibal’s face.

“ *Fuck,* Hannibal, you feel so good,” Will said, snapping his hips into that delicious heat. “I love you so much, you’re *mine* , Hannibal, *mine* .”

“Will…” Hannibal moaned softly, and the sound of his name on Hannibal’s lips, said like *that* , had Will coming deep inside Hannibal.

When Will pulled out, he pushed Hannibal flat on his back and buried his head into the older man’s chest, sighing contentedly. For several moments, neither of them spoke. They didn’t need to. Hannibal pressed a chaste kiss to Will’s forehead.

“I love you, too, Will.”

The afterlife meant that they no longer needed to sleep and did not grow tired. Time seemed to stand still. In fact, it seemed to simply cease existing. The weather seemed to shift entirely

based on their shared moods; if Will was feeling rain, it would rain. If Hannibal wanted a warm spring day, it would be so. It was a world of their own making.

Strictly speaking, they didn't *need* to eat either. Yet that hardly kept Hannibal from preparing extravagant meals for them everyday, always finding the house fully stocked with what they wanted (well, *almost* everything; there was a noticeable lack of human meat).

They never grew bored, never felt the need to interact with other people. Will was pretty sure that if he really wanted to, they could find a way to enter the spaces where other people inhabited their afterlives. Will was also pretty sure he'd never find the idea enticing. Though on one sunny afternoon when Will *had* been thinking about additional company- the kind that came in the form of a furry four-legged creature- a dog had bounded down the coast towards him and Will had taken him home to Hannibal, who simply smiled at him indulgently and never once complained, not even when they eventually came to have eight dogs running around the house.

Most days, Hannibal would spend his time cooking, reading, writing, and playing the harpsichord. Will would often take to the sea, sailing blissfully until he felt the tug of Hannibal calling him home. Will would often return to the villa and corner Hannibal against the wall and then have his wicked way with him.

Most importantly, they were *happy* . Truly and exorbitantly *happy* . Will had never felt so much love occupying the space between his lungs and Hannibal had never looked so unguarded, pleased that the one he loved could *see* him for who he truly was.

They did not speak of the past. Will would occasionally experience twists of sadness in his chest but then Hannibal would be there, loving and adoring him until the pain receded into nothing once again.

Will often spent his time wondering how two people who were objectively so broken and fucked up could end up with something so beautiful, in the arms of their beloved, for eternity. Hannibal would tell him that their souls had carved out a space for themselves in the universe, too stubborn to submit to or participate in any plans a possible higher authority would have for them.

Will was more of a romantic. He thought that maybe, just maybe, their souls had finally reunited, coalescing into the one being they were and always had been.

A being made of a great and burning light. Icarus and the Sun, made one at last.

Chapter End Notes

and that's the end!!

the ending was planned this way from the beginning so if you look back, there are hints along the way of this eventuality. anyway, the point is, they are finally reunited, happy,

and at peace.

i know this story was a wild ride but I do hope you all enjoyed it!!!

thank you all so much for reading, commenting, leaving kudos, etc.! it means the world to me <3

stay tuned for future projects! next hannigram fic of mine will be a fake/pretend marriage s1 AU !!

End Notes

Thank you everyone for reading! I'm unsure of how long the work will be, but I do have all the major plot points in mind so I promise I won't be abandoning the project!

I hope you enjoyed and hope to see you all again for the next update :)

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!